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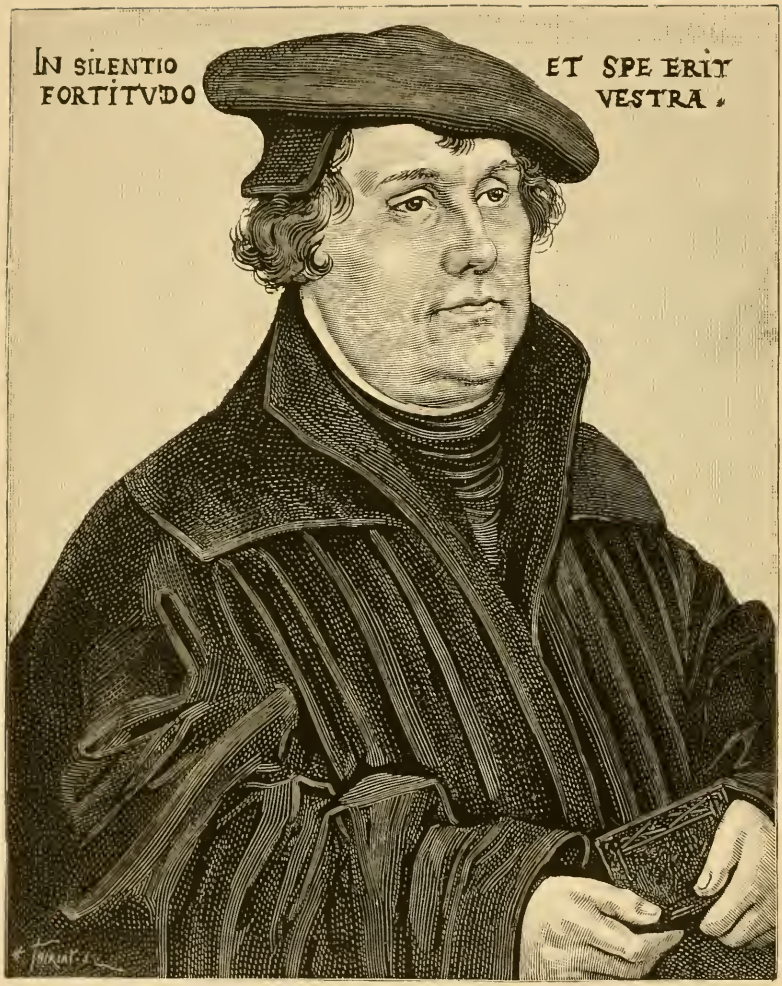
MARTIN LUTHER

HIS LIFE AND WORK.



MARTIN LUTHER.

From a Portrait painted by Lucas Cranach, 1532.

MARTIN LUTHER

HIS LIFE AND WORK.

BY

PETER BAYNE, LL.D.

VOL. I.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

However unlike in respect of merit, this work on Luther has an affinity in class and kind with such books as Dr. Newman's *Apologia* and Mr. John Morley's *Voltaire*. These are personal histories; but the personal history—all the more bound to be true as a personal history on this account—serves for presentation of an important phase of belief, a notable chapter in spiritual evolution. Dr. Newman portrays and exemplifies one type of religion; and without question it is in these days a widely extended type. He accepts "the Catholic Roman Church" as "the oracle of God," infallibly interpreting Scripture, and rendering credible doctrines, such as transubstantiation, which neither Scripture nor reason had previously sufficed to prove.* Mr. Morley's *Voltaire* stands out as representative of a phase of belief diametrically opposite to Dr. Newman's. All effort to prove man capable of entering into relation with the Spirit of the universe is abandoned as chimerical. Between these

* *Apologia pro vitâ suâ: by J. H. Newman, D.D.* 1864. *P.* 374.

extremes stands Luther, to denote what may claim to be the central stream of Divine-human religion, resting on Inspiration as a true source of knowledge, the records of which, embodied in Holy Writ, have been committed for authoritative interpretation to no man, church, or tribunal on earth, but have been left to be interpreted by the individual reason and conscience. When we consider the enormous development of ethical and religious inquiry which has recently taken place, and how puissantly Atheism and Romanism exalt their horns, we may be inclined to admit that the proportion of things requires a re-statement, if but in outline, of the case of those religionists who courteously but firmly PROTEST against illusion on the one hand and unbelief on the other.

The authorities on which I have chiefly relied are Walch's great work in twenty-four volumes, the six volumes of Luther's Letters edited by De Wette, the four volumes of the Table Talk, Loescher's collections, and Karl Zimmermann's four volumes of pieces relating directly to the Reformation. Matthesius, Melanchthon, Spalatin, Ratzenberger, Keil, and many others might be mentioned. For the period preceding the posting of the Theses, Jürgens is himself a library. I have derived assistance also, in various ways, from D'Aubigné, Von Ranke, Hase, Worsley, and, in his larger work, Köstlin.

It will be seen that I do not on all points follow Luther's leading. If religious thought in our day were exactly what it was in Luther's day, then would it be certain that Luther had toiled in vain. But it has been pleasant and, I trust, to some extent spiritually vitalising, for me to live for years in most intimate converse with a soul intensely imbued with faith in God; and if these volumes should kindle in any hearts but a little of the glow that warmed the heart of Luther, I shall be richly rewarded.

P. B.

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Book I.

LUTHER FROM VARIOUS POINTS OF VIEW.

MARTIN LUTHER.

Book I.

LUTHER FROM VARIOUS POINTS OF VIEW.

CHAPTER I.

LUTHER AND ANGLO-SAXONDOM.

For all the vast kindred—German, Anglo-Saxon, American—which, speaking many dialects of one great mother-tongue, stretches from the Danube to California, lashing out in collateral waves to Canada on this hand and to Australia on that, Martin Luther is a central figure, and his name a rallying-word.

In that old time—the misty daybreak of modern European history—when the landmarks about which antiquarians and ethnologists dispute are wavering into visibility through the fog, a great people can with reasonable certitude be discerned occupying the Cimbric Chersonese, from the waters of the Baltic round to the mouth of the Elbe. Sturdy, capable folk, shrinking from no sort of difficulty or peril, eminent in all forms of work—to sail, to fight, to hold the plough. One great division of these Saxons and Angles took ship with Hengist and Horsa, to do a stroke of work upon

the Scots and Picts, to give a name to England, and to become the central element in the population of the island of Britain. Another great body of the race struck inland, cutting their way among the wild tribes with the edge of the sword, and gradually possessing themselves of territories in the very heart of Germany and of Europe. They encountered Charlemagne and his splendid fighting-men, the Franks. Charlemagne and the Saxons wrestled for supremacy in Europe for more than thirty years. He prevailed, hanged the irreconcilables, converted the convertible, and, on the whole, taught the Saxons to bridle their conquering and annexing propensities, and to content themselves with a goodly but not immense land in Central Germany, where they would not be in his way. A country watered chiefly by the Elbe river, broad and deep, flowing from south-east to north-west, with many tributaries; a country of rugged yet genial character, hills of moderate elevation, shaggy with pine and birch, not without veins of silver and lead, not without marble and basalt, topaz and amethyst, and varied agriculture; a country singularly like some parts of England, still more like Scotland: the district of Möhra, a few miles south of Eisenach, where Luther's family dwelt from time immemorial, struck me as more like the north of Scotland than any country I ever saw. The people, also, have quite the look of Scottish lowlanders, who are known to be, in the Lothians especially, of pure Saxon race. In point of fact, those of the nation who had made themselves a nest in Germany retained a close

likeness to their brethren who had taken the sea-path: men of frank, brave, sturdy, and honest aspect, women ruddy and white, the comeliest of Germans—not a brilliant people; not given, either in Saxony or in England, to freaks and jets of eccentric virtue or extravagant vice: of solid, moral temper, an indestructible fibre of Philistinism both in English and in Saxons. This resemblance between the Saxons and the British has not escaped the sure eye of Prince Bismarck. It is a matter of strict blood-relationship, and is, without question, one main reason why the teaching of Luther met with prompt and thorough acceptance in England and in Scotland. The Germans claim, and justly, to be of the kindred of Shakespeare; but with still clearer right may all Anglo-Saxons claim to be one in blood with Luther.

The world does not at all agree with King Duncan that there is no art to read the mind's construction in the face. The world believes invincibly in faces; and when a characteristic portrait of an historical personage has got itself fixed in the world's memory and imagination, no degree of literary skill can change the impression made. The victories of Leuthen and of Rossbach, and all the eloquence of Carlyle, will never neutralise the effect upon mankind of the foxy face of Frederick. Luther's face is known by heart to every one, and every one interprets it without hesitation. Sincerity, courage, strength, are inscribed on every feature. The make of the man corresponds to his face. Solid he stands upon the solid earth, no firmer-footed man in all the centuries.

A rugged face, without the fine lineaments of Greek and Italian sensibility, betraying that bluntness to art which belongs to all the tribes of the northern sea and the forest, of the mist and the moorland; a face of no saintly elevation, or serene vision and intellectual comprehensiveness. Its power is general and massive. But it is a face absolutely devoid of cunning, absolutely devoid of fear. Nothing little in it; no spite, no acrid exasperation, no trace of impudence. If this man fights, it will not be for fighting's sake, but he will do his fighting well. Of the qualities for which he is accepted as a typical or representative figure, none, probably, comes more to the front than courage. "No more valiant man," says Carlyle, "no mortal heart to be called *braver*, that one has record of, ever lived in that Teutonic kindred, whose character is valour." This quality was fixed upon by Mr. W. E. Forster as what mainly impressed him:—"If I were obliged to pick out the most courageous man for both physical and moral courage that I know of in history, I think I would point to Martin Luther."

Throughout the Teutonic family of nations this man is looked upon as a benefactor. He has laid the van of civilised mankind—such is the *consensus* of opinion among them—under obligation. What, specifically, is he reputed to have done?

To state it in the widest way, yet with precision, he is thanked for a gift of freedom. You say that freedom may be no gift at all? Well, perhaps; but we shall agree, at least, that freedom is a thing men covet. Be

it a blessing or a curse—gleam of witching colour on apple of temptation, or touch of dayspring from on high—freedom is intensely loved, inexpressibly valued. He who has helped to extend human freedom—nay, he who has testified to freedom, were it but with a Brutus knife—will be *thanked* for what he has done.

But the freedom for which Anglo-Saxondom thanks Luther is held to be no mere momentary thrill of illusive sweetness, but an essential condition of health and of enjoyment, of melodious life and of rational progress. In a world that has but sternly qualified happiness for any, a world in which hampering, obstructive, depressing conditions are experienced by all, it is insufferable that the sources of pleasure should be artificially curtailed. The request addressed by Diogenes to Alexander is one that mankind will always sympathise with. Luther told the Papacy to stand out of the world's light, to give free course to whatever sunbeams might be struggling down to cheer us. Artificial virtue, artificial vice: this is at bottom what the instinct of the world has accused the mediæval system—the Roman system—of setting up. Roughly, with abundance of error as to details, the world has believed, and, in the main, has rightly believed, that Luther broke the spell of ecclesiastical law and monastic tutelage, and brought men out into the open air of natural ethics. He did not write, and never could have written, the couplet—

> "Who loves not woman, wine, and song,
> Remains a fool his whole life long;"

but the tens of thousands who have attributed this to him, and sung it in his honour, have rightly discerned that he resented with fiercest passion the ecclesiastical presumption which marked off the bounties of nature as, in God's sight, common and unclean. The consecration of the home is higher than the consecration of the convent. Martin Luther, house-father, with little Johnny Luther on his knee, as Mr. Spurgeon loves to picture him, is regarded as the world's defender against monkish ideals. "Martin," says Carlyle again, commenting on his portrait as he saw it in the Wartburg, "has eyes so frank and serious, as if he could take a cup of ale as well as wrestle down the devil." He helped Europe to freedom of life.

Anglo-Saxondom thanks Luther, next, for freedom of conscience. For more than a thousand years it had been the law of Europe that the heretic should be put to death; and the death assigned to heresy was fire. Hating and fearing heresy with an intensity of emotion which in our age the most imaginative can but feebly realise, Luther, driven to the conclusion less by philosophical reasoning or even by Scriptural authority than by common sense and human feeling, declared that this method of dealing with the heretic was wrong from top to bottom. Were it otherwise, he said, the hangman would be the best theologian. Is it objected that Protestants have persecuted? Is it scornfully averred that "Calvin burnt Servetus"? The reply is clear, and is absolutely conclusive. In the first place, Servetus died some years after Luther was laid in his grave. In the

second place, though it is indisputable that Calvin contributed more than any man to bring Servetus to his doom, it is equally certain that Calvin remonstrated against fire as the method of death,* thus attesting a distinct advance upon the old sentiment by which torture was adjudged to heretics as the appropriate punishment. But, in the third place, and clinching the argument, the immeasurable horror which the burning of Servetus excites is an obvious and infallible criterion of the *advance* which, under the auspices of Luther, the civilised world has made upon the old persecuting spirit. It is *because* one drop of blood, shed on account of opinion, under Protestant auspices, provokes —naturally and rightly provokes—more astonishment, horror and outcry, than is called forth by a lake of blood, deep enough and broad enough to float the British navy, shed by Rome and the Inquisition, that the morning and evening newspapers shriek about Servetus. Every shriek is a testimony to Luther as the man who, rejecting the tradition authorised by a thousand years of pious persecution, proclaimed it to be an atrocious and anti-Christian blunder to make the hangman the ultimate resort in theological controversy. And freedom of conscience will involve freedom of reason. If

* I state the result of a searching investigation of the original evidence, instituted by me into the question. The fact that convinced me was this: A friend of Calvin's, hearing it rumoured that he had tried to save Servetus from the fire, wrote asking how he could bespeak a relaxation of punishment for such a man. Calvin in his reply does not hint that his friend is misinformed, but says that when he comes to Geneva he, Calvin, will explain to him the reasons by which he had been actuated.

Luther did less than justice to reason—and this must be admitted — his work, his general achievement, necessitated that reason should be set free. No man could more sincerely hold than Luther that nonsense cannot come from God.

"All freedom-apostles have been, to my thinking, cordially detestable." The words are Goethe's, who mortally hated the charlatan, the unquiet, loud, confused agitator. But he made an exception in favour of Dr. Luther. He ranged himself by Luther's side, and said that his business too was to protest in art and in science. In this sense—embracing all theologies, all ecclesiastical arrangements—Luther is the captain and king of Protestants. While there is a lie to be denied; tyrannic wrong to be confronted; a grievance to be rectified: there will be work for Dr. Luther. So long as torpor steals over enthusiasm, and lethargy oppresses animation; so long as red tape and traditionary system choke the spirit and the life; until the devil falls extinct, smitten by the last inkstand; we may protest in the name of Luther. In science, art, and literature; in pulpit, parliament, and market-place; all those who take the part of right against might, and light against darkness, are soldier-friends of Luther. In a word, Goethe accepts him as one of those kingly and consecrated men in whose name successive generations may swear allegiance to truth.

CHAPTER II.

LUTHER AND PRESENT-DAY THOUGHT.

So much for the general impression made by the personality of Luther upon the public opinion of civilised nations.

Nature might stand up and say to all the world, *This was a man!*

When, from the first cursory glance, we proceed to more specific scrutiny, we are met by the fact that the sphere and element in which Luther worked was religion. Whatever service he did to the race was done in the name of religion. If he bade a great mass of shadow move aside, and no longer impede the descent of the light, he did so by bidding the priest, first of all, stand from between man and his God.

Macaulay says that Hume "hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion." That Luther occupies a prominent place among those who must be recognised as having promoted the general democratic movement of modern times is unquestionable; but there are a few who, though loud in their acclamations round the advancing car of democracy, make at best a sullen and aggrieved acknowledgment of the benefactions rendered to man-

kind by one who, precisely when the grand outburst of modern life was beginning, quickened, or re-quickened, in Europe the sense of religion. These, as they look round upon the higher quarters of English literature at this time, must feel themselves rebuked. Our generation takes its ideas of the value of religion as a force and factor in history from the biographer of Cromwell rather than from Hume. Our men of science and philosophy, our most fascinating essayists, have become moralists and preachers. Theological controversy of a searching and masterly kind intertwines itself with scientific discussions, and presents itself in literary treatises. Pages might be filled with lists of eminent writers engaged, on the one side or the other, in submitting to investigation and debate the foundation questions of religion. And Luther is the most important religious man of modern times.

One thing must be admitted, and the admission cannot be made without a deep feeling of satisfaction. The tone and temper of the controversy have, with some qualification, been excellent. The late Professor Clifford did, as Mr. Matthew Arnold has with just disapprobation pointed out, indulge in feats and freaks of offensive extravagance. Irritating expressions, contemptuously jubilant over antagonists supposed to be hopelessly beaten, have been used by others. Whether Mr. Matthew Arnold has been altogether irreproachable on this score, is a question which he is himself understood to regard as open to discussion. But, viewed comprehensively, the tone of the opposition has been

one of grave respect for all sincere religion. And, indeed, there has been perceptible, on the part of some, a feeling almost of melancholy, suggested by what seemed to them the completeness of their own atheistic victory. The "cyclone" of scepticism had left a desolation so haggard that those who appeared to rejoice in its fury, and had done much to rouse it, stood aghast. For them, too, the light of the stars had become as darkness when they no longer spake of God. Knowledge of the physical universe—knowledge restricted to the three score years and ten—turned out to be, if an illumination of the brain, a congelation for the heart.

It can hardly be said to be unfair, on the part of those who still listen for some accents of that speech and language of the stars which all nations were once supposed to know, to submit that this sense of desolation among the illuminated classes is, negatively, a verification of the Christian position. If works so widely representative of culture, as the books of George Eliot, and the later books of Carlyle, attest the presence of an unsatisfied want, the sense of an unsatisfied craving, it is something, in an age that accepts the doctrine of evolution, to be able to name a religion whose historical development can be traced for thousands of years, and which expressly meets and supplies that want. If Christ is not dead, the infinite heavens remain open to man. That is what is wanted. Reasonable persons do not expect earth to be metamorphosed into heaven. What they want is a glimpse in the

distance—a door of hope—a candle of the Lord inextinguishable—a future that is not barred with blackness and the grave. This is the Christian promise of life. There is promise also of spiritual health and spiritual joy.

Mr. John Morley, in a work eminently characteristic of nineteenth century scepticism, as distinguished from eighteenth century scepticism, seems to admit the unique nobleness of the Christian ideal. Writing of the apostle and high priest of eighteenth century unbelief, Mr. Morley candidly points out that Voltaire "missed the peculiar emotion of holiness, the soul and life alike of the words of Christ and Saint Paul." He, Voltaire, "has no word, nor has even shown an indirect appreciation of any word said by another, which stirs or expands the emotional susceptibility, indefinite exultation, and far-swelling inner harmony, which De Maistre and others have known as the love of God, and for which a better name, as covering most varieties of form and manifestation, is holiness, deepest of all the words that defy definition." And again: "This sublime trait in the Bible, in both portions of it, was unhappily lost to Voltaire. He had no ear for the finer vibrations of the spiritual voice."

Luther, while his general power of brain was certainly superior to Voltaire's, had, perhaps, an opener, a keener, a more reverent ear and responsive heart for those finer vibrations of the spiritual voice than any man named in history since Saint Paul. If, as Mr. Browning holds, "little else is worth study than the

incidents in the development of a soul," we ought to find something to interest us in the spiritual history of such a man. And it happens that the materials for tracing the evolution of Luther's character —the growth within him of that strange fire which first kindled his own being into the brightest, warmest, loveliest glow of spiritual life, and then, becoming volcanic, shook and rent the whole world of civilisation with its heavings—are singularly rich. Whether you accept the religious inspiration as a valid and normal force in the making and moulding of history, or whether you regard it as abnormal and diseased, you may take a scientific interest in the study of the force itself, as seen in an example so remarkable as is furnished by Luther.

But, of course, the main and mighty interest of a candid study of the character and life of him who initiated the most important spiritual revolution of modern times, is for those who have *not* relinquished the hope that science and religion, knowledge and emotion, light and fire, may jointly and perennially benefit the world. Must the end and acme of civilisation be a corpse-like, snow-cold illumination? Must knowledge extinguish faith? Is religion a matter of delirious visions, or of eternal fact? Must health destroy holiness? These are the questions—this last, in particular, is the question—on which light ought to be thrown in a biography of Luther.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOD-WARD GRAVITATION.

If the ideal of holiness, or, say, the ideal that embraces holiness within the sweep of its perfection, as the final bloom of spiritual health and blessedness, is higher than any other ideal, it cannot be too much to assert that a place ought to be found for it in individual and national character. All the imagery by which religion, in its noble forms, has ever been illustrated and symbolised, points to its elevating influence, to its tendency and power to raise man above himself. The earthward gravitation is mighty upon us all. No effort is required to aid *it*. Religion furnishes the positive, the uplifting, the dynamic element in human existence. By his animal nature man belongs to the earth, by his spirit he belongs to the universe. Morality is the religion of the planet; religion is the morality of the universe. When he reached the pinnacle of the animal creation, and opened his eyes to the stars; when he became man enough to observe the blue sky and the sun; then man saw God. If this is what Mr. Matthew Arnold means when he says that religion is morality touched with emotion; if he admits that the light which irradiates and ennobles morality

into religion is the light of the Eternal streaming from the heavens, then he speaks the simple truth. It is not possible that the mere knowing faculty, the mere cerebrating power, as evinced in Euclid's Elements or in Babbage's calculations, should inspire and elevate. This Comte felt; felt and said with seer-like power: but he erred marvellously in thinking that an image consciously set up by man himself, though framed with the subtlest skill of the plastic imagination, and apparelled in richest splendour of poetic words, could be a true object of worship. Against the gravitation of earth man wants the gravitation of heaven—a sunward gravitation, a gravitation of life towards light, a counter-gravitation to the gravitation of the tomb—a gravitation of spirit towards spirit, of the child-spirit, man, towards the Father-spirit, God.

Of the stupendous power of religion, considered merely as a force, no one who has looked into history can entertain a doubt. Whether we contemplate it as the power that gives stability and permanence to institutions in periods of repose, or as that which consumes or re-fashions them in periods of exceptional and paroxysmal ebullition, it has been the mightiest of the forces that act upon great masses of men. We should, however, have little right to protest against falsehood in the name of Luther, did we refuse to acknowledge that religion may be a potency for evil as well as for good. Much of the acutest misery experienced by mankind has been the fruit of religion. It has fettered industry and paralysed the action of mind. It has handed over national

heritages to priestly castes. No fury has outrun the fury of antagonist religionists arrayed against each other sword in hand.

Estimating the sum total of the mischief done in the name of religion, a few thoughtful men have been found, both in ancient and modern times, to ask, with Lucretius, whether religion is indeed an angel of blessing, and not rather a sorceress persuading mankind to their bane. But this proves only that there may be diseased states of religion, not that religion is itself a disease. The mere fact that religion sometimes consecrates evils, "commends them," reconciles men to them, goes far to prove that the mischief it has done is exceptional, the good habitual. Else how could the consecrating power have been obtained for religion? How could approbation of religion have been registered among the hereditary and authoritative instincts of mankind? In all ages, under all states and conditions of men, the honestly religious man has been more trusted, more respected, than the irreligious man, even by the irreligious man himself.

The fact is that religion is excellently good, or virulently bad, according to its quality and the conditions under which it operates. So closely analogous is the case of religion to the case of fire that a comparison between the two has more than a rhetorical value. Fire also is a distinctive possession of man. He may be defined as the animal that knows fire and God. Sum the calamities that have been wrought by fire,—

the enormous amount of property it has destroyed, the cities it has laid in ashes, the millions of lives it has brought to an end in torment, and you may be tempted for a fleeting moment to believe that man would have fared better without its treacherous ministry. And yet it would be insane to doubt that, without the aid of fire, the race could never have emerged from savage misery, or that stage after stage in the journey of civilisation has been marked by a more and more scientific use of the fiery element. So it has been, and so it is, with religion. Chief among the differentiating attributes of man, it may degenerate into superstition or break out in frenzy, but its natural office is to benefit and to exalt, to enrich human existence with endless aspiration and immortal hope, to raise man to a conception of freedom which is, strictly speaking, beyond earth and its despotic laws (whose executor is death), and introduce him to the citizenship of the universe.

"This above all, to thine own self be true." Shakespeare has given us no sounder precept. Man cannot prosper by divesting himself of the distinctive characteristics that have been evolved in the course of uncountable ages. That the bird has wings is a sufficient reason why it should fly. That religion has been evolved; that man has risen to belief in God; that man is a religious as a bird is a flying animal: this is sufficient reason why man should worship. Religion may be defiled,—then you are to cleanse it; religion may be blind,—then you are to enlighten it; but, if religion is

a true product of evolution, then it is as irrational for man to get rid of religion as to get rid of his conscience or his reason. History falls into incoherence and triviality if its main factor has been an insane illusion. Man is either the maniac child of nature or the son of God.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

In no province of human affairs has the law of progress been more conspicuously manifested than in the province of religion. True, there has been an asbestos thread of identity traceable along the whole course of Christian evolution; but the history of religion, in its central current, that is to say, in the line of Hebrew and Christian inspiration, has been a history of successive advances. There is no reason to believe that the series of successive and, on the whole, expanding and improving dispensations has reached its term.

"On the whole." That is a significant phrase for any one who will view history, and in particular the history of religion, with due comprehensiveness. There may be advance, on the whole, although, at particular periods, there is retrogression. The combination of periodical retrogression with a general movement onward is adequately as well as simply represented by the revolution of a wheel when a carriage is in motion. Take any point in the rim of the wheel, and you find that in part of its revolving course it moves backward. The wheel

has to come round before the point moves onward, but at each successive whirl the point is farther forward than it was before the last descending curve began. In the history of civilisation, in the history of religion, progress has been thus modulated.

The Christian religion is the religion of inspiration. There is nothing mystical in this statement, nothing that any one can dispute who gives a scientific account of the matter. The critic who should undertake to report scientifically on the Homeric poems without recognising such a thing as poetical inspiration would be justly hooted down. What lends the poems life, what gives them authority, is the unique gift which their author possessed. The organ of poetical inspiration is an exceptional human personality. The poet is the original fact; whence *he* got his inspiration is nature's secret. In like manner, the organ of the religious inspiration has been the prophet. Successive light-fountains of inspiration—each a memorable man or small group of men—have beaconed the historical evolution of Christianity. Between the successive outbursts of inspiration the advance might seem to be retarded, arrested, nay, reversed. But the wheel came round. In the circle of the year of God, the wintriest of the months proved to have ministered to the charm of spring and the glory of summer. Thus, in relation to the inspirational outburst represented by Abraham, the entire phenomenon of Mosaism, indispensable in itself, may be looked upon as retrogressive. The ethical spirit of Abrahamism was more serene, kindly, and

elevated than that of Mosaism. The spirit of the Abrahamic promise passed into provisional eclipse in Hebrew nationalism, Hebrew particularism. The promise of blessing to all nations in the Abrahamic seed was contracted into a promise that all nations should be for the service and glory of the Jews. On the minds of men who glowed with the religious inspiration, the prophets of Israel, a truth higher and nobler than this gradually dawned; and at length inspiration attained meridian splendour in the person of Christ. Mosaism had done its work. The wheel of world-progress had performed a revolution. When Saint Paul told his countrymen that Israel, in Christ, had broadened out into humanity, and that the process of blessing all nations in the Seed of Abraham had begun, he said one of the grandest things, intellectually and morally, ever spoken in this world. "Not to seeds, as of many, but as of one, to thy seed, which is Christ." That is, perhaps, not logical; but it is divine.

Mankind had not been prepared for Abrahamism; and Mosaism intervened. Mankind were not able to accept the Christianity of Christ and His apostles; and the long retrogressive cycle of mediævalism began. Again there was retrogression; yet, since, once for all, the method of advancement is not to be by miraculous transformation but by educational and probationary evolution, not causeless, not useless, not hopeless retrogression, but retrogression gradually rolling round in new and heavenlier sweep of progress.

It is an absolutely certain and strangely impressive

fact that the presentiment of a vast retrogressive movement was felt in the Apostolic age. Influences were seen to be already at work, influences of varied character, influences too subtle in nature and too closely resembling those of the true religion to be discriminated from them, yet virulent enough to be named Antichristian, which would go far to neutralise and pervert the teaching of Christ. As Mosaism was mundane and contracted in relation to Abrahamism, so the Mediæval System was mundane and contracted in relation to the Christianity of Christ. This does not imply that the Latin Church ceased to be Christian, any more than the fact that the Hebrews did not rise to the spiritual ideal set before them by their own prophets barred their claim to be depositaries of the promise. But, on the other hand, it must be known to every one who has looked into mediæval history that the ascription to Rome of the name of Babylon, the ascription to the Pope of the title of Antichrist, preceded by centuries the time of Luther. Apart from Wickliffe, apart from Huss, it had become positively a commonplace in Christendom that the spiritual life of the Church had been oppressed by the antichristian assumptions of ecclesiastical authority.

Luther applied a terrible surgery to the distempered body of the Church. Some snarl at him for having attempted the work of healing. But for him, say the acrid haters of all religion—happily few—the spirit of philosophical indifference, represented by the good-natured, finely-gifted, diplomatically-minded Leo X.,

might have prevailed over the faith of Abraham, Moses, and Christ. And this may be true enough. Unless God had at that time called some other prophet to do Luther's work, the religion of Europe would either have sunk into superstition or evaporated into ethical universalism. Luther did give a new lease to the faith of Christendom. He denied that he had been original as to the matter of his preaching. With all the earnestness of which he was capable he disclaimed any other office than that of leading men back to the fountain-heads of inspiration. But he staked his life on earth, and his eternal welfare, upon the belief that, to him as well as to Abraham, God *had* spoken. If intensity of conviction, if paroxysmal vehemence of proclamation, constitute originality, then Luther was original. Vividness of sympathy with inspiration is itself a kind of inspiration. The poet is a revealer of the meaning and intent of poetry worth whole schools and colleges of pedants. The Border minstrel who sang of Flodden knew better how Homer felt than all the learned men in Europe. Systems of criticism, whatever may be their advantages or disadvantages, are apt to choke the poetic sense. It is so, *mutatis mutandis*, with theology and the religious inspiration. When Luther appeared, the colossal system of scholastic theology and discipline sat upon the breast of Christendom. Being himself of giant build, he was able to throw the colossal system from off him; to arise; to make appeal to the original inspiration; to proclaim to Europe that the original

inspiration had been obscured and corrupted, and to re-announce that inspiration in words so piercing and so loud that Europe heard him, and shook itself awake. The torch was kindled from the inspiration of the past, and borne onward as an inspiration for the future.

CHAPTER V.

PROTESTANTISM AND POPERY.

It would appear, then, that Luther made appeal to the past. He asked men to return to those fountains of inspiration in which the greatest religions of the world, or, as he would have said, the one great and perennial religion of the world, took origin. It is interesting—to use no statelier word—to think that we have in immediate presence to-day—as near us as our Bibles—a religion which was a living fact, a recorded inspiration, before Darius crossed the Hellespont, before the civilisation of Athens beamed into fast-fading beauty. Luther called upon his contemporaries to consider and understand the essential meaning—the central affirmation—of those patriarchs, prophets, and apostles who, from the beginning, had marched at the head of the procession of the world's religion.

But this appeal to the past was only the form, the natural, proper, and potent form, in which to give the signal of a new departure. A nation's oldest songs are the best bugle-music for its newest battles. It is one of the laws of life, attested in all instances of genuine historic evolution, that the impulse of progress shall reveal itself as a strenuous and resolute effort to preserve

or to regain old treasure. Perhaps there is no better test of the naturalness, the genuineness, of the evolutionary process in any particular case than is thus afforded. That which is extrinsic, and springs from no root in the past, soon withers away. That which is a true growth in the world-tree of progressive life derives the energy that pushes it into bud and bloom from rootlets stretching into the remote past. The mythology of Greece and Rome came like a vision, and so departed. But Hebraism grew into Christianity; the bare stem shot upward, and threw out many branches; Christianity was at once the oldest and the youngest religion in the world.

Thus rooted in the past, thus clothed in the verdure of a springtide in historic evolution, the Reformation of the sixteenth century appears before us. Luther was its first and—as no one would have more readily acknowledged than the magnanimous Calvin — its greatest prophet. In no revolution known to the historian were the elements of old and new more intricately intertwined, more subtly mingled, more curiously related to each other.

Obviously it was, to begin with, an intensification of the religious enthusiasm, a vehement and impassioned fervour. For nearly two centuries, the sixteenth and the seventeenth, this energy of religious faith and feeling can be described only by imagery derived from conflagration, storm, and earthquake,—to describe it otherwise is to describe it incorrectly. Nations were inflamed; dogmas which to us seem cold iron were to

them bolts of glowing fire. This is the first aspect of the Reformation. You miss everything if you miss this.

But, contradictory as the proposition may appear, it is nevertheless true—and when we contemplate the Reformation from the distance of four centuries, its evidence need not be obscure—that the movement initiated by Luther tended to permanently *diminish* the intensity with which religion had dominated mediæval life. This was one of its main benefits to civilisation. "Be not righteous over-much." There is a too-much-ness possible, nay, extremely probable, in religion. The logic of the infinite is so simple and so tremendous—so exquisitely small is this world in relation to the universe, so inexpressibly little is time in comparison with eternity, so appalling is a sincerely credited hell seen in contrast with the azure of heaven—that nothing has been commoner in history than the victimisation of tribes and peoples by their religion. If we look with deliberation and carefulness into the nature of the Christian religion, we shall perceive its finest essence, as presented in the teachings of Christ, to be connected with, if indeed we might not say to consist in, a revulsion and reaction against the tendency of the terrible religious instinct to tyrannise over every province of life, and to destroy the symmetry of character and endeavour. Christ's Christianity is intended to be a consecration, falling gently as the dews of God upon all human life, promoting instead of destroying its healthful activities, and enhancing its natural joys.

But the over-muchness of excited feeling—the over-muchness of encroaching superstition—the over-muchness of usurping priestism—these tend always, while they degrade religion, to heat its votaries into fever or to subdue them into slavery. Were it not for successive rectifications of the theory and practice of religion—which rectifications constitute the beneficent religious revolutions of history—mankind would have been hopelessly enthralled by its priesthoods, property would have passed wholesale into the hands of ecclesiastics, and the burning eye of heaven would have scorched the world.

The Reformation, when its paroxysmal stage had passed, was found to have adjusted the balance of life more truly in relation to man's two-fold existence, bodily and spiritual, than it had been adjusted in the preceding period. The layman had relatively risen. The priest had relatively gone down. In this change, in so far as its typical realisation went, the personal history of Luther prefigured the history of the nations that accepted him as a prophet. In youth he submitted himself with all his heart to the system of the mediæval Church. Religion was then for him, not a spirit pervading life and lending a celestial dignity to its entire circle of activities, but a separate business, a round of services, a saying of prayers, a singing of masses, an absorption of the whole time, an occupation of the whole strength. No contrast could have been more sharp and striking than that which the life of Luther in subsequent years presented to all this. The essence of his religion was now placed in the loyalty of his heart to

God—in his faith in God's kindness—in this and in his doing, with his might, whatever honest work fell to him to do. No idea had more thoroughly possessed itself of his mind than that Christianity is a religion for laymen, not for priests.

Doubtless he might himself have been startled or distressed by the idea that his influence should permanently moderate the intensity of religious emotion. But ought the fact, whether contemplated by Luther or not, to induce us to pronounce the Reformation, even from a strictly religious point of view, a failure? May we not estimate too highly the value of intensity of feeling? When people comply with Carlyle's requirement to be "dreadfully in earnest," are they not apt to go dreadfully wrong? Religion is always too intense when it ceases to reason. Religion is always too intense when it dwells to distraction on the ideas of infinite power and infinite duration, and becomes incapable of doing the work of this poor finite world, not merely well, but as well as possible. Overstrung intensity has hitherto been a symptom of disease or diabolism in religions—witness the shriekings of savages round holocausts of victims sacrificed to their gods, witness the religious torturings of long Christian centuries. The progress of civilisation, we cannot be too often reminded, is a torch-race. Let but the feelings be once excited into ungovernable intensity, and the torches are extinguished. The Reformation, after its paroxysmal period, with or without intention and fore-knowledge on the part of Luther, brought reason and moderation into

the religion of Christendom; and no Protestant who has the courage and the intelligence of his principles need shrink from frankly saying so.

The tempering of frenetically-vehement religious feeling into healthy and kindly warmth went well with that other effect of the Reformation—the breaking of the yoke of the priesthood. Say, if you must, that the result was a secularisation, on a vast scale, of the life of the Christian nations. Rather it was an acceptation, into the place of honour due to them, of things which had been sacerdotally pronounced common and unclean. It was the substitution of a true and natural consecration for an artificial and priestly consecration. To bring life nearer to nature is not necessarily to put it farther from God.

We saw that Luther belonged to the Teutonic kindred. You cannot describe him with more comprehensive rightness than by saying that he concentrated in his own person the qualities, good and not so good, of the great Teutonic race. And if we look along the four centuries which have elapsed since his birth, we shall perceive that his message, in its rugged practicality, in its homespun veracity and plainness, has had an affinity for the Teutonic as contrasted with the Latin races, for the tribes of the north as contrasted with those of the south. In the twofold current of civilised mankind flowing towards the west, the same contrast has been maintained. North America is Protestant, South America is Popish.

It will be worth our while to take with us here the

opinion on the bearing upon national welfare of this choice between Protestantism and Romanism, on the part of the nations of Europe, which has been expressed by two of the most celebrated authors of the present century. The opinion was delivered by each in the full maturity of his powers, and each had given many years of study to modern history.

Carlyle, as was to have been expected, views the Reformation from the spiritual side. He looks upon the rejection of Protestantism in the sixteenth century as the conscious rejection of truth. It was thus, no doubt, that Luther mainly regarded it, nor need we be much surprised that he, with his immense strength of conviction and defective capacity to sympathise with other minds, should have done so. All the same it must be laid down as an imperative condition of intelligent and fruitful discussion of the comparative merits of Protestantism and Catholicism, that the great body of Romanists in the sixteenth century shall be recognised as equally honest with Luther, and that the great body of Romanists in the nineteenth century shall be admitted to be as honest as Carlyle.

"The Reformation," says Carlyle, whose observations on the subject will bear some condensation, "was the great event of that sixteenth century. Protestant or not Protestant? The question meant everywhere: 'Is there anything of nobleness in you, O nation, or is there nothing? Are there, in this nation, enough of heroic men to venture forward, and to battle for God's truth *versus* the devil's falsehood,

at the peril of life and more? Once risen into this divine white-heat of temper, were it only for a season and not again, the nation is thenceforth considerable through all its remaining history. What immensities of *dross* and crypto-poisonous matter will it not burn out of itself in that high temperature, in the course of a few years! Nations are benefited, I believe, for ages, by being thrown once into divine white-heat in this manner. Austria, Spain, Italy, France, Poland—the offer of the Reformation was made everywhere; and it is curious to see what has become of the nations that would not hear it. They refused Truth when she came; and now Truth knows nothing of them. The sharpest-cut example is France; to which we constantly return for illustration. France, with its keen intellect, saw the truth and saw the falsity, in those Protestant times; and, with its ardour of generous impulse, was prone enough to adopt the former. France was within a hair's-breadth of becoming actually Protestant. But France saw good to massacre Protestantism and end it in the night of St. Bartholomew, 1572. The genius of fact and veracity accordingly withdrew—was staved off, got kept away, for two hundred years. But the writ of summons had been served; heaven's messenger could not stay away for ever. No; he returned duly; with accounts run up, on compound interest, to the actual hour, in 1792; and then at last there had to be a 'Protestantism,' and we know of what kind that was."

Carlyle is far from alone in thinking that the

excesses of the French revolution might have been mitigated if the transition had not been so abrupt from persecuting dogmatism to the teaching of Voltaire. "It is hardly possible," writes Mr. John Morley, "to deny the service which Protestantism rendered in preventing the revolution from Catholicism to scientific modes of thought from being that violent, abrupt, and irreconcilable breach which we now observe in France and Italy, when we remember that the cause of toleration was systematically defended in England by men who as systematically defended the cause of Christianity."

Lord Macaulay holds that in respect of intellectual animation, political freedom, and material prosperity, the Protestant nations have been the vanguard of civilised mankind. "It cannot," he says, "be doubted that, since the sixteenth century, Protestant nations have made decidedly greater progress than their neighbours. Compare the history of England and that of Spain during the last century. In arms, arts, sciences, letters, commerce, agriculture, the contrast is most striking. The distinction is not confined to this side of the Atlantic. The colonies planted by England in America have immeasurably outgrown in power those planted by Spain. Yet we have no reason to believe that at the beginning of the sixteenth century the Castilian was in any respect inferior to the Englishman. Our firm belief is, that the north owes its great civilisation and prosperity chiefly to the moral effect of the Protestant Reformation, and that the decay of the

southern countries of Europe is to be mainly ascribed to the great Catholic revival.")

Most interesting, and surely not uninstructive, are these far-sweeping glances by Lord Macaulay and Carlyle, men of great genius, who gave their lives to the study of modern history. But they are too broad in their generalisation to be of much value in a scientific sense. Perhaps—with a view to that reconstruction, or at least reconciliation, of Christendom, of which it is permissible to hope, or at lowest to dream—it were well to be chary of censure and of applause alike, and to consider in how far the phenomena of Protestantism and of Romanism, since the sixteenth century, may have a connection with that distinction of race with which they have been so conspicuously associated.

The peoples that were the immediate heirs and representatives of deceased classicism, the peoples that sat glassing themselves in the mirror of the sunny Mediterranean, partly in reverie upon the glories of the past, might smile at the legends of saints, and question the powers of priesthoods, but were knit to the mediæval system by a witchery deeper than mere conscious preference. To hand over responsibility to the Church promoted peace of conscience; and habit made the regularities of ecclesiastical observance not fatiguing. Art had grown up, for the southern peoples, in the shelter of the Church, grown from a lovely infancy to a prime of resplendent power; and it was a shock to the finest instincts of their delicately sensitive organisation to see religion, in church and cathedral,

stripped suddenly of its apparelling of beauty, and reduced to Hebraic hardness and bareness, by the stern iconoclasts of the north. There is something also—there is much—in the mere age of nations, as there is in the age of men. In the south of Europe it was afternoon; in the north it was morning. The peoples of the south, especially the Italians, had long since passed the blooming-time of civilisations. If too sceptically wise to have strong faith in the professions of the old Church, they were too cynically indifferent to have much hope in the promises of the new. We are to remember, also, that half the virtues are of the families of obedience and acquiescence, of repose and permanence.

If we sympathetically judge and appreciate the religion of the contemplative, rest-loving, art-loving south, can it be denied us to sympathise also with the religion which made itself a domicile in the Protestant zone? Rugged energy was its characteristic—energy going to the heart of things. The Italian hand is a finer implement than the Teuton hand, but the Teuton arm is best adapted to swing sledge-hammers and to rend rocks. The virtues that are of the family of strength have flourished among Protestant nations—the defects of Protestantism have been the defects that arise from strength in excess.

Is there a proposition touching the revolution of the sixteenth century to which all devout and intelligent Catholics may be asked to assent? There is. One and all—from Dr. Döllinger to Cardinal Manning, with

Cardinal Newman in the midst—they may be expected to admit that when Martin Luther posted his Theses on the church door in Wittenberg, a reform of a comprehensive and thorough kind had become necessary in the Latin Church.

Is there a proposition to which all Protestants who lay claim to historical comprehensiveness of vision, and to Christian candour, gentleness, and sympathy, may also be asked to agree? Yes. It is that the Reformation was marred by violence of speech, by turbulence of feeling, by lack of forbearance. That these things were conspicuously visible is undeniable. That the Romanists promptly had recourse to physical force, attempting to burn out Protestantism before it had even got a name, is indeed a fact; and it may be argued that, since the demand for reform was answered, literally, with fire, the reformers could not be blamed for impatience in action and vehemence in speech. But exasperation, violence, fury of reciprocal invective, even if unavoidable, are evils, and must, even though the general result be good, have questionable effects. Luther himself would have admitted this, although, with the frankness and terrible practicality that characterised him, he stoutly defended the vehemence of his proceedings. Hurricanes cannot be played upon flageolets. But, though you admit the indispensability of the hurricane, you may regret and try to repair the damage it does.

There is a concession, an infinitely important concession, which Protestants and Catholics might, at this

time of day, exchange with each other. Could they see eye to eye on this vital matter, the way might be paved for sympathetic consultation on many other points. The concession required from Protestants is that they have, on the whole, done injustice to the Church of Rome in representing her as having abjured, forgotten, or despised the doctrine of salvation by the grace of God. The concession required from Catholics is that they have been unjust to Protestants in refusing to own that, in the age preceding the Reformation—the age when the Papal throne was filled by such men as Alexander VI. and Julius II., and the fine sporting gentleman Leo X., —this, the central truth of Christianity, was obscured, neutralised, and made of little practical effect by the prevailing traditions.

The justice of the concession suggested to Protestants may be briefly but irrefragably established. The day is past for elaborate theological discussion, but we can all understand the logic of one sufficient and conclusive fact. Luther accepted the doctrine of grace while in the bosom of the Roman Church, accepted it from a teacher whose orthodoxy had never been called in question. During years of heavenly life—life made heavenly by vivid consciousness of transformation by the grace of God—Luther found that it was possible for him to remain in the Church of Rome; and he maintained without flinching, then and subsequently, that salvation by grace was the doctrine of all the great Catholic divines. Luther knew and preached for years in the

Church of Rome that the Christian tidings of salvation are *not* that, for the performance of a certain amount of task-work, a man shall be saved, but that, born again in righteousness by omnipotent grace, a man shall be renewed in the image of God through faith in Christ.

Of Aquinas I can pretend to no more acquaintance than just enough to give me the impression of an incomparably simple, gentle, calm, comprehensive, and, above all, religious soul; but a glance into the *Summa* of Aquinas is enough to show that faith, and grace, and the Divine life in the heart of man, are words of cardinal significance in his scheme of truth. Of the writings of Peter Lombard, the other great pillar of mediæval theology, Mr. Maurice, an impartial witness if such there be, says: "Faith in God Himself is set forth as the great blessing; faith is the way to the high reward, the knowledge of the Perfect Good, the all-sufficing blessedness."

Can the justice, on the other hand, of the concession asked from Catholics on this point be disputed? Had not the doctrine of renewal in the image of Christ receded into the background? Did not the very fire of God, in the centre of the Christian temple, need trimming? Luther attained to the Divine life, but not until he had almost perished, soul and body, in efforts to work himself into God's favour by strictness of ecclesiastical observance; and no sooner did the light within him prove its divine origin and power by coming into conflict with moral darkness, than he began to find that he was *not*, as he had hoped, in complete harmony with the

Church, a discovery which soon flashed on him the conviction that he was called upon by God to assail and to remove a corruption that had almost become fatal.

To put it in one word, the Divine life of the Church had been formalised into a system. Against this there had been reactions and complainings for a thousand years. We have a testimony from Maurice to the deadening power of the system as express as that which has been quoted from him to the existence of the faith which it paralysed. "The Catholic system," he says, in reply to Dr. Newman's allegation of the antiquity of that system, "has a claim to boast of chronic continuance, inasmuch as it has been a chronic disease affecting the Catholic Church during its whole existence, first slightly, then seriously, then almost vitally." The essential difference between the Church system and the Christian way of life Maurice brings out when he speaks of "the miserable and hopeless task of serving God in order to procure His forgiveness, instead of serving Him day by day in the strength of His forgiveness."

Had an earnestly religious man—a Gregory VII. or a Pius V.—been in the Papal chair when Luther attacked indulgences and made the air vibrate with the preaching of a new Paul, it is scarcely conceivable that he would have treated the Saxon as a heretic and a foe. Such a Pope might have been taken aback by Luther's vehemence, and might have said—

> "The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness
> And time to speak it in;"

but it is not conceivable that he would have objected to the monk's proclamation that pardon of sin could not be bought for money, and that Christian salvation meant renewal of a man's life, and renewal of the world's life, through the irresistible grace of God. Luther would have been accepted as the most efficient of allies in a reformation of the Church from within. Gentlemanly Leo, hating fuss and fanaticism, good-natured but frivolous, and feeling himself a Prince first and a Pope second, trifled with the business, tried to manage it in ways inconsistent with each other, and failed wholly.

The really potent, the sincerely religious, reaction against the Protestant Reformation, is to be dated subsequently to the disappearance of Leo from the stage. The disinterested zeal of the Jesuits cannot be rationally questioned: Ignatius Loyola was a man of noble type, high-minded and self-sacrificing. But it is on the face of the matter that the enthusiasm of Loyola and the Jesuits was for an institution, while Luther rested absolutely upon the truth, to which he had pressed through long agonies of spirit, and which had come to him as the very voice of God.

No duty is more incumbent upon Christians than to believe that humanity, sooner or later, will be pervaded with the life of Christ. The Protestant Reformation may prove but an episode in the evolution of Christianity—in the spiritual education of mankind. Protestants are bound by their name, and much more by the requirements of Christian brotherhood, to ask,

from time to time, whether there is not yet an answer to their protest from Catholic Christians. Roman Catholics, for their part, while looking with something like pride upon the hundred millions or more of the human family who worship in the courts of their Church, must think it strange and sad that nations with so much religion among them, and so much of truthfulness and general morality, should continue, century after century, to protest solemnly, in the name of God, that the Church of Rome has failed in her duty towards them and towards Christ. Protestants and Catholics alike, if they at all realise their situation, must feel that they are placed by their schism under enormous disadvantage with reference to unbelievers—their schism, be it observed, not in respect of separate organisation, but of rancorous hostility of spirit. They proclaim Christ's message of peace to the world, and they have not enough of His spirit in them to be at peace among themselves. The great sections of Christendom ought to be as companion clouds, softening the blaze of light, or shedding bounteous rain; they have been as hostile clouds, charged with antagonist electricities, launching their lightnings at each other. Catholics have conscientiously shuddered at Protestants; Protestants have made it part of their religion to hate Roman Catholics. It is not amalgamation that is wanted; it is mutual esteem and communion. In this direction an encouraging advance will have been made when a vivid sense of the duty of promoting the reunion of Christendom comes

to pervade alike the Catholic and the Protestant churches.

It is a great encouragement that the differences which exist between rival schools of metaphysical theology have almost ceased to form barriers to Christian union in the vital sense. The experience of four centuries has taught Christendom that theological metaphysics, whatever interest or importance may attach to them on other grounds, are not indispensable to the effective speaking or acting of Christ's Gospel. The controversies that raged with volcanic fury in the sixteenth century between Romanists and Protestants touching the freedom of the will and the purpose and foreknowledge of God have been reproduced in Jesuit and Jansenist discussions in the Church of Rome, and all Roman Catholics may now be counted on to admit that there is room for both the contending parties within the Church of Christ. Throughout Protestant Christendom large sections of religionists have taken for their respective watchwords the approximate solutions given by divines of problems which are insoluble. Some have followed the clue of Calvin, some the clue of Arminius, some the clue of Owen, some the clue of Wesley, some the clue of Jonathan Edwards; but all clues lead, however subtle the windings and wanderings of the maze they trace, to impenetrable mystery. Hence a profound persuasion has settled down upon the most serious, thoughtful, and reverent minds that, though the following of those metaphysical subtleties may give play to acute intellects, yet none of the results arrived at

ought to be the subject of authoritative imposition or be permitted to impair the freedom of the Christian Church. The Canons of the Council of Trent, the Anglican Articles, the Confessions of the Reformed Churches, are all, by the irresistible influence of time, becoming monuments of Christian history rather than authoritative definitions of Christian belief. Say of them the best you can, you must admit them to be uninspired. Turn from them to a letter of Paul, to a psalm of David, and the difference between inspired and uninspired composition appears.

Since the Churches agree that the eternal silence has been broken—that it was indeed the voice of God that spoke to Adam, to Abraham, to Isaiah, to Paul—that Christ combines the essential attributes of a true object of worship, Human Divinity and Divine Humanity,—the judgment of sensible men on the relative claims of Protestantism and Popery, and on the possibility of establishing a co-operative harmony and amicable *modus vivendi* between Protestants and Catholics, will depend comparatively little upon metaphysical theology and comparatively much upon practical results.

Giving amplest credit to the Church of Rome for the example she has set of devout obedience, of respect for poverty, of regard for a social ideal wider than that of nationalism, candid judges will take account of important drawbacks. Rome claims for one Church precedence over the whole sisterhood of Churches; and it has to be shown how this can comport with Christ's reiterated injunctions against any form of lordship

among His people. Rome imputes mystical powers to the priesthood, and is bound to show that this does not involve disastrous consequences both to the spirituality of religion and to the educational uses of the Christian ministry. Rome maintains auricular confession and a celibate clergy. This is a terrible clause in the Protestant indictment against the Papacy. A celibate clergy and the Confessional are incompatible with healthy and happy social life. Intelligent men will not believe—none but simpletons will believe—that where celibacy of clergy and auricular confession prevail, domestic life will not be honeycombed with intrigue. Of all men the man for whom it is worst "to be alone" is the Christian pastor. Pope Hildebrand, in straining his powers to introduce celibacy of the clergy, did one of the most baneful things ever done in this world. If the nations and churches of the south received from their fathers this heritage of woe, need we wonder that they have been backward in their reception of modern ideas? In the dogma of Papal Infallibility, in the Syllabus, the Church of Rome has seemed to Dr. Döllinger and other competent judges not only to halt but to go backwards.

Protestants have fallen far short of perfection. Restlessness, dissidence, self-asserting vulgarity, rampant individualism may be laid to their charge. But a good deal must in fairness be set off against these ugly traits. Protestants have inherited much from Luther. They have been willing to fight and to suffer for truth; they have not sat easy under wrongs, although these pleaded Divine right. They have wiped from

their Christianity the reproach of being a passive and mean-spirited religion, and shown that it can have aggressive and positive virtue. The fear of God they have shown to be compatible with the serenest or the fieriest intrepidity in the presence of any power *but* God. They have been open to new ideas, have not doggedly opposed science, and have stood stoutly by the standard of freedom in political affairs. Their domestic life has, under favouring circumstances, been the best and loveliest realisation yet seen of Christ's heavenly-homely ideal of earthly existence. Their pastors have, on the whole, been exemplary in morals, faultless in all duties of citizenship, inestimable as friends and guides of the people, thoroughly in sympathy with political and social progress, and yet well cultivated enough to be above the servility and flattery of the charlatan. They have made a notable approach to success in rising above the idea of a congealed or petrified revelation, a final and formulated inspiration. *Because* the inspiration of other times was a vital inspiration, it is not to be summarised in a series of propositions, but to be sympathetically apprehended by the religious mind. Is this to supersede the Bible? By no means. It is to bring out, with scientific exactitude, the principle in virtue of which the Bible cannot be superseded. A poet who could produce better poetry than the first book of the Iliad would be the very last man in the world to set aside Homer. The religious inspiration is, to put it at the lowest, as inimitable as the poetical inspiration. The Epistle to the Romans

is irreproducible; but, so long as any soul is visited by religious inspiration, that soul will find a response in the words of St. Paul. Critics and pedants in the literary world, commentators and systematisers in the religious world, have always tended to oppress by their accumulations the original inspiration. Young poets, the founders of new schools and eras, strengthen themselves for their flights by taking baths of poetic life in old ballad wells; and modern seers and prophets, the organs of a new impulse in religious progress, have returned to the original fountains of the world's religious inspiration. This was the real meaning of, and this is what remains essentially and perennially true in, Luther's appeal to the Bible.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CENTURY OF LUTHER AND SHAKESPEARE.

As the fifteenth century drew near its end the European seed-field was very clearly getting into a high state of preparedness for some great change, some epoch-making departure. Material civilisation had possessed itself of powers which alone might suffice to fill the mind of the West with hope and self-trust. In the early part of the preceding century Berthold Schwartz had invented gunpowder—or re-invented it—for the Chinese are understood to have had it for many ages. In the pacific East it had been used for industrial purposes; the fierce tribes of Europe soon applied it in battle. That wrote the death-sentence of feudal war, changed the picturesque array of chivalry into the standing army of modern times, and lowered, henceforth and for ever, the place of personal prowess in the tariff of human capacities. While the soldier mastered his fire-arm, the seaman learned to rejoice in the mariner's compass. Adventurous men roamed across the ocean, dispelling mysteries and opening boundless expanses to the eager eye of science.

About the middle of the fifteenth century, Constantinople had fallen. The Eastern Empire, that long had

lingered as a shadow of the old order, passed away. At the same time, however, and in a considerable degree through the same cause, the culture of the ancients emerged from long eclipse. The day had gone by when fear could be entertained that the gods of the classic pantheon might exercise any enchantment on the western peoples. There had indeed been a time when the pageantry of the old faith continued to appal the imagination of Europe. The mediæval rustic, as he crept homeward at sunset by the ruined temple in the hollow of the wood, shuddered at the thought of a terrific Apollyon, whose prey, unless the kind saints protected him, he might become. But such fancies, though they furnished imagery to Bunyan for his Pilgrim's Progress, had lost power over the general body of the population. All superior minds regarded the recovered masterpieces of Hellenic literature with feelings of entranced admiration.

In this same fifteenth century, so fruitful in elements of change, a power had been added to the resources of civilisation which, though mechanical in form, seems almost to take rank among spiritual agencies. The printing-press is the most puissant agency that ever gave wings to thought, or turned ideas into forces. It has a specialty of interest in connection with the revolution inaugurated by Luther. In this instance, *for the first time* did it show its full power. Luther without his printing press would have been Moses without his rod. Luther was the first, and to this hour he continues the greatest, of those tribunes of the people

who have addressed their audience through the press. It is the grandest of all the mechanical implements of Democracy; and Luther, whether he would have liked to be told so or not, initiated modern Democracy.

Thus ushered in, thus equipped, the sixteenth century broke upon the West. To the first century of the Christian era belongs a diviner mystery of heavenly light, but what century in the whole historic series can compare with the sixteenth in opulence of general power? It ran through the mightiest changes, harvested the mightiest thoughts, made the mightiest discoveries, leaving succeeding ages to sigh over a freshness departed, and to make up, by affected admirations and fantastic excitements, by tricks of singularity and contortions of mediocrity, for the charm of unexhausted youth. At the beginning of the sixteenth century we meet Luther's religion of faith, at its close Descartes' philosophy of doubt. It was a century of the discovery of new worlds. America had been touched upon in the fifteenth century, but practically its discovery belongs to the sixteenth. The Copernican astronomy laid bare the face of the heavens. Bacon proclaimed irreconcilable war with metaphysical speculation, and took possession of the terrestrial ball in the name of observation and utility. Luther's communication of the Bible to the mass of men was, strictly speaking, a parallel and auxiliary movement to the discoveries of Columbus and Copernicus. He threw it open to mankind as Columbus threw open America, as Copernicus unveiled the stars, as Bacon

annexed nature. Mr. J. S. Brewer has remarked the correspondence in attitude between Bacon and Luther. Both had the same invincible distrust in metaphysical speculation. Aristotle had been dominant both in theology and in philosophy; Luther dethroned him in the one, Bacon in the other. We want God's truth, Luther said in effect to the schoolmen, not that we may talk about it, not that we may draw it out into a net of innumerable distinctions, but that we may accept it and live upon it. An immense appetite for reality distinguished the century that first saw America, and read the Bible. At its banquet of fact, of truth, of nature, it laughed aloud in immeasurable disdain at the words, words, words, the immense feast of shells, of the schoolmen and their Aristotle. It was not a sentimental century. When it spoke of the fear of God, it attached to the words a meaning as grim as that of Dante. In tenderness, in forbearance, in all the sweet and precious virtues that spring from the union of sympathy with imagination, it was inferior to our own time. It had a giant's strength, and used it as a giant. Its movements were the movements of a giant's limbs, its voice had the harshness, with something of the coarseness, of a giant's voice. But it was a great century—one of the greatest the world has seen.

To the sixteenth century belongs that man who, by the acclamations of the most qualified judges, unanimous now for a couple of hundred years, occupies the highest throne in literature, William Shakespeare. Qualities which, individually and apart, are

wonderful and rare possessions—wonderful enough to be called genius, and rare enough to secure fame—appear in him as single stars in a galaxy; and we have to ask, not what gift he had, but which of the most splendid gifts he wanted. He was a poet—a dramatic poet—and his subject was human life as he saw it in the world around him, and sympathetically constructed it in the past. True to the sixteenth century, he had an all-comprehending grasp of fact, a universal and insatiable delight in fact. His dramas, therefore, in which he avowedly held the mirror up to nature, are inestimably valuable as historical records, or reflections, of the general panorama and procession of life in the century of Luther. The enormous impression made by the Reformer upon his age—the fermentation, the commotion, the stirring up, which he and his University, his Bible and his doctrine of omnipotent Grace, produced in men's minds—cannot be more authentically realised than by observing the way in which they figure in the Shakespearian dramas.

Those dramas are, for one thing, saturated with Biblical allusions and phrases. Bishop Wordsworth, of St. Andrews, has worked out this part of the subject in his volume on Shakespeare's knowledge and use of the Bible. We may learn from him how many scores or hundreds of parallel passages exist in the Bible and the dramas of Shakespeare. The Gospel of Matthew, for example, is quoted sixty times, the Book of Genesis thirty-one times, the Epistle to the Romans twenty-three times. This of itself goes far to prove

that the age mirrored in the plays was an age when religion was an interest which the most miscellaneous audience could be counted on to appreciate, and when the Bible had become the most familiar of books. But in Shakespeare there is evidence of a more particular theological knowledge than Bishop Wordsworth seems to perceive. I have ventured to say elsewhere that it would not be extravagant to hold "that all the main points in the theology of the Reformation could, by one well skilled in the science and system of theology, be pieced together from his dramas."*

It can be proved that he appreciated, with the nice accuracy of an expert, the characteristic marks and notes of Luther's theology, and this has almost never been true of authors who did not accept that theology. But the inference is not safe in the case of Shakespeare; for, owing to the vast amplitude and minute correctness of his knowledge of particular crafts and callings, he has been proved, to the satisfaction of pedants, to have been a schoolmaster, a solicitor's clerk, a physician. He took an insatiable interest in all that interested men, and he found the theology taught by Luther to be an object of consummate interest to the men of his generation. In the serene altitude of his own mind, he anticipated the modern development of sympathetic tolerance, and was able to discern and to approve of what was good in Catholic and in Protestant. It is remarkable that, as he genially but inexor-

* *Blackwood's Magazine*, April, 1883. Article on Shakespeare and George Eliot.

ably laughed out of court the Puritan grudge against cakes and ale, so he rebuked, with still more sharpness, the hypocrisy—likely to show its cloven foot in a century when a thousand preachers dwelt upon the impotence of the human will—of pretending to be wicked by irresistible necessity. An admirable evasion, he says, in language too coarsely characteristic of the sixteenth century to be quotable in the nineteenth, of the profligate scamp, to lay his transgressions to the charge of a star!

Luther's voice first broke upon Europe teaching repentance, and denying the virtue, in the way of securing pardon for sin, of any external act, any merely formal word, any money payment, any penance that was not accompanied with change of heart. The thought that true penitence involved a parting from iniquity got thus into the brain of Europe. Accordingly, in a London theatre, on three critical occasions, in dramatically analysing the mental state of three important characters, Shakespeare dwells with pointed insistence upon the paralysing of prayer by harboured sin. Angelo, Claudius, Macbeth, try to pray, and cannot; and in each case it is from the same cause. They do not sincerely repent. In those moments succeeding the murder when the tragic pathos of Duncan's white hair dabbled with blood seems to affect Shakespeare's imagination less than the spiritual suicide of a soul that had aspired to nobleness, Macbeth cannot pray.

"But wherefore could I not pronounce amen?
I had most need of blessing, and amen stuck in my throat."

Henceforward, he could not sleep, and he could not pray. So was it also with Hamlet's uncle. Neither in ancient Greece, nor in the London of to-day, could Shakespeare have found an audience capable of appreciating theology so searching as this; in the century of the Reformation he could, and did. It would not be easy to frame a better summary of the theology of the Reformation than Isabella, of *Measure for Measure*, gives us in the following lines:

> "Alas! alas!
> Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once;
> And He that might the vantage best have took
> Found out the remedy. How would you be
> If he, which is the top of judgment, should
> But judge you as you are? O, think on that;
> And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
> Like man new made."

Portia speaks to the same effect:—

> "Though justice be thy plea, consider this—
> That in the course of justice none of us
> Should see salvation; we do pray for mercy;
> And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
> The deeds of mercy."

Equally explicit in recognition of the grace of God as the source of salvation are such expressions as "though all that I can do is nothing worth," and "irreconciled iniquities." But the sharpest-cut proof to be found in Shakespeare of a penetrating insight into the heart of Luther's doctrinal restoration occurs, curiously enough, in two lines spoken by the Friar in

Romeo and Juliet. In these we hear of "two opposed foes" that "encamp" themselves in man, namely, "grace and rude will." The antithesis on which the whole doctrinal scheme of Luther turned—the omnipotence of grace, the recalcitrant stubbornness of the old man—the law in the members warring against the law of the mind—could not be more accurately stated.

A microscopic examination of the Shakespearian dramas might, likely enough, reveal an acquaintance on the part of their author with special circumstances in Luther's history. Such has never been attempted by me, but one case of coincidence—possibly nothing more—between Shakespeare's diction and the incidents of Luther's life may be worth mention. In 1518, the year after the appearance of the Wittenberg Theses, Luther met Cardinal Cajetan, the Pope's Legate, at Augsburg, and engaged with him in an argumentative single combat, in which there were some very fierce passages, and in which, by general consent of contemporaries and posterity, Cajetan came off second best. He was startled and stung—affected with a mixed sensation of horror and of terror—by his experience of Luther. It was hoped, however, by peace-makers who earnestly wished to effect a reconciliation, that another interview might have a more pleasant result, and these asked Cajetan to meet the monk once more. "No," said Cajetan, sharply, "I will have no more disputation with this beast of a creature." He added his reason for so deciding, which must be given in the original Latin, "Habet enim profundos *oculos* et mirabiles *speculationes* in capite suo,

—for he (this Luther) has deep eyes, and there are strange speculations in that head of his."

Shakespeare—this admits of proof explicit enough to justify a confident statement—could read Latin with reasonable fluency. It was his habit—this must have been discovered by every one who has in any measure investigated his manner of dealing with his materials—to select and appropriate for future use every picturesque or peculiarly expressive word he came across in his reading. Turn now to Macbeth:

> "Thou hast no *speculation* in those *eyes*
> That thou dost glare with!"

It may be a mere coincidence that the words in italics occur in close juxtaposition in Cajetan's Latin and in Shakespeare's English, but to many it will seem more probable that Shakespeare had read some account of the Augsburg interview and had noted the graphic words. If so, it was a Shakespearian touch, perfect in dramatic appropriateness, to put the speculation not into the head but into the eyes. The worth of this circumstance, as evidence of association between Shakespeare's thoughts and Luther's doings, will be variously estimated; but there remains one item of proof that the greatest of sixteenth century poets had the greatest of sixteenth century Reformers a good deal in mind, to which a definite and indubitable value must be assigned. There can be absolutely no dispute that had Luther and his Reformation not been among the best known things at the close of the sixteenth century, a London audience would never have been told by Shakespeare that the

University at which Hamlet and Horatio had been fellow-students was Wittenberg.

Shakespeare, acknowledged sovereign of the realms of mind, the most sagacious, the most comprehensive, the most calm of mere mortal men, belongs to the same period — the same transitional epoch — with Luther, the father, directly or indirectly, of all that has been most vital and progressive in modern religion. Shakespeare was too mighty to enlist under any special banner, but it is pleasant to think of him as looking with immense interest, and at least a general acquiescence and approval, upon the work done by his Saxon brother-in-blood. All who still value the achievement of Luther—all who are still able to enter into the enthusiasm of John Milton when he felt "the sweet odour of the returning Gospel imbathe his soul with the fragrancy of heaven"—may have satisfaction in knowing that Shakespeare recognised the transcendency of benefit conferred upon human life by religion. Of himself we may venture to say what he says of Benedick, one of his most genial and admirable characters: "The man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him by some large jests he will make." And never has the office of religion in shedding sacred influences upon social life, thus tempering its passions and deepening its peace, been touched upon with a more delicate yet manly tenderness of appreciation than is suggested in these lines, put by Shakespeare into the mouth of Orlando:—

> "If ever you have looked on better days;
> If ever been where bells have knolled to church."

If Shakespeare may thus be regarded as an ally of Luther in claiming permanence for religion in Europe and in England, Luther may be looked upon as co-operating with Shakespeare in the culture of Europe and of England by giving to the modern world the Bible. Wickliffe prepared the way for it, but it was Luther who burst open the door at which Wickliffe had knocked. Both Wickliffe and Huss—this was Luther's deliberate and repeatedly-expressed opinion—aimed at particular abuses; he struck at the system, he rent the veil, he proclaimed the living Christ. To a Europe spiritually moribund, he preached the gospel of omnipotent grace; and as that gospel flashed on him from every page of Holy Writ, he told men to trust to no human authority, but seek it there for themselves. Write that on his monument. He stands with outstretched hand—the Germans, rightly judging, have placed his bronze statue in this attitude on many a pedestal throughout his dear Fatherland—offering the wholesome Bible to his Teutonic kindred, appealing to it against all Pope-worship, priest-worship, saint-worship, creature-worship, that may defraud man of his honour and freedom, and God of His sovereign glory. When mankind have outstripped and left behind them the law of Sinai and the love of Calvary—when the Bible and Jesus Christ have ceased to provide a rule of duty and an ideal of life for human society,—then may his statue be cast down.

Book II.

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH.

1483—1507.

Book II.

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH.

CHAPTER I.

MARGARET'S LITTLE BOY.

The early shadows of a November night had fallen on Eisleben, the trim little county town of the district, or, as we should say, the shire of Mansfeld, to the north of Thuringia. In Saxony, near the northern end of the great Thuringian wood, in the heart of the broad-stretching lands occupied by the German family of nations, near to the very spot where Christianity was first preached in those parts by Boniface, stands the little town. Here a matter is going forward respecting which the big bustling world is in a state of supreme unconcern. *Die Sonne tönt nach alter Weise*—the sun shines much as usual, making his tuneful way through the heavens without perceptible variation in the melody. In the humble room, however, in which lies Margaret, the young wife of John Luder, Ludher, Leuder, Lothar, Lotter, Lutter, Luther—no one had ever cared to ask how the poor miner spelt his name—an event was expected which, from prince to peasant, is of interest to young couples. Between eleven and twelve in the late autumnal night, on the 10th of the month—the day,

Keil says, was Monday—Margaret gave birth to a boy. In course of time she became acquainted with a well-known person, *nomine* Melanchthon, who greatly prized information respecting this boy of hers, and questioned her particularly as to his birth. She told him that she distinctly remembered the day of the month and the hour of the night, but she could not be sure as to the year. Quite sure no one can ever be. Another son born to John and Margaret, an excellent, sensible man, James Luther, believed that the year was 1483, and so it was received among the Luther kindred, but no proof was adduced upon the subject. James Luther must have been *nearly* right, and it is of purely pedantic interest whether he was or was not perfectly right. The facts of the birth, as the inquiring Melanchthon gave them in due course to the world, are quite sufficiently ascertained. Let us call the year 1483. It is the year when a famed Italian, Savonarola, a true prophet of God, but with something shrill and shrieky in him, was strangled and burnt in Florence. It is the year also when another Italian, whose name stands for the maturity of art and the entrancement of beauty, first saw the light. This one was called Raphael.

Margaret, at all events, had no doubt as to the day. It was the 10th of the month. And we must not hurry on with jaunty modern confidence in the assumption that there was no commotion in heaven, earth, or under the earth, on occasion of this birth. If we are to realise the life of the past, we must

condescend to cast a glance at myths which for generations figured as facts, and perhaps still, in some quarters, pass for such. Loescher, in a high state of Protestant indignation, mentions Hieronymus Cardanus, Lucas Gauricus, F. Junctinus, and others, as having searched the stars for evidence of an astrological nature to prove that an arch-heretic was to appear about the 10th of November, 1483, and convinced themselves that Margaret's little boy was the portended miscreant. Loescher has much satisfaction in being able to state that times and seasons did not quite bear out the identification. But there were people who did not go so far as the stars to discover that this child had peculiarly close relations with the powers of darkness. A woman of Leipzig, whose blooming piety a host of reverend gentlemen were ready to attest, affirmed, many years after his birth, that Margaret had told her that her child was the fruit of express commerce with the devil. That luminary of sacred erudition, Gabriel Prateolus, whose tomes are still to be found in libraries, countenances, though with some caution, the tale of the Leipzig woman. Since Montanus, the heretic, argues Gabriel, and Mahomet, the false prophet, were possessed with and impelled by familiar spirits, as all the right kind of men agreed in thinking, was it not inherently probable that Luther also should be in special relationship with the devil? The particulars of the infernal embrace are specified by Prateolus, the agent being an incubus, the scene a public bath.

Nor were there wanting myth-makers on the *other*

side. Matthesius, whose sincere affection for Luther engages us in his favour, but who is intellectually a child, prattles about the prophecies that announced Luther's birth. The fact that John Luther, who had probably, with his wife, come shortly before to Eisleben from the south, removed, a few months after the birth of his first-born, to Mansfeld, seems to have suggested to the minds of idolaters of Luther the idea of a journey by John and Margaret parallel to that undertaken by Joseph and Mary, and a birth corresponding to that which took place at Bethlehem. It was to be expected, once the parallelism was struck upon, that there should be some answering gleam to the star that appeared in the East. Loescher accordingly informs us that "trustworthy writers" give out that, on the St. Martin's Eve when Luther was born, the evening star was much larger and brighter than it had ever been before. This of the evening star—which is a reminiscence, if no more, of sacred poetry—is the one refreshing glimpse I can recall in the stark prose of these Protestant myth-makers. Popish or Protestant, the myths prove simply that the child now born was to grow into one of those men who are passionately, or more than passionately, loved, trusted, obeyed—loved as supreme benefactors and dearest friends, trusted as leaders, obeyed as kings; and who are also passionately, or more than passionately, hated as heretics, antichrists, devils.

Returning, then, to the room—probably a temporary lodging—in which, with or without stellar participation, the boy was born, we can discern, or plausibly infer

from subsequent knowledge, that his eyes have a notable sparkle. Not improbably also the cry of surprise, alarm, and distress in which, in the manner of human kind, the infant intimates its sense of the liberty taken with it in ushering it into this world, might have hinted to ears medically expert that, though blessed with vigorous lungs, it had something eccentric in the intestinal region. But we cannot be certain that Luther's dyspepsia, as well authenticated as Carlyle's, was congenital. The incidents of the birth were, in short, those usual in such cases. Margaret, heedless of stars and demons, would cling to the thought that she had brought a man into the world; and when the little one nestled to her side, and her husband whispered kind words in her ear, adding, as is not improbable, some syllables of ejaculatory prayer, she would fall asleep without foreboding.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN LUTHER.

The claim of John Luder, or Luther, to the paternity of Margaret's little man being recognised, we shall find it worth while to make his acquaintance. He had come to Eisleben from the moorland hamlet, Möhra, three or four days' journey, as days of journeying then were, to the south, or, more strictly, the south by west; a most modest and secluded hamlet, where two or three score peasant families nestled together, practising agriculture on their bits of land, moderately prosperous on condition of intermittent industry. Each peasant householder was proprietor of his own land. Rugged agricultural toil, qualified or supplemented by a tincture of mining, gave character to the natives. A few miles to the north, the landscape rises and breaks into the rocky outskirts of the Thuringian forest, plumed with various foliage; but about Möhra the long, low swells of undulation are bare of wood, and, though now completely subdued by the plough, would doubtless, in the fifteenth century, retain much more than they do at present that aspect of brown and rugged moorland to which the village owes its name. In Möhra, in the adjoining district of Eisenach, and northwards until the Thuringian wood is left behind

and we are met by the spurs of the Hartz Mountains, there had, from time immemorial, been sparsely scattered a kindred, or clan, of the name and blood of Luther. The name, under a variety of forms, from Lothaire to Ludher, is substantially identical, and there can be no reasonable doubt that it had its origin in one, or perhaps two root-words signifying leadership among the people. That the blood of the famed old fighting Kaiser Lothair flowed in Luther's veins may be no more than a picturesque imagination; but that Luther's fathers were stalwart and courageous men, fiery in the charge and stubborn in the conflict, in those rude times when the grand life-business of Saxons was to fight, is as good as certain. And quietly as we have left Margaret's baby sleeping at its mother's side, let us admit from the first that an immense reservoir of fighting power—a puissancy and imperious force like that of great captains and emperors—lay in the breast of the boy. In no quality more than in this was he the epitome of the German character; for no quality more than for this was he followed with a passionate enthusiasm of submission during his life, and acclaimed as the national hero in succeeding years. Except an insult to his God, nothing roused the volcano in him like an insult to his beloved Germans; and every blow he dealt upon the crest of Babylon derived part of its weight from his burning wish to show the fine Italian gentlemen, with their supercilious, patronising glances, what stuff there was in the rugged German clowns. Gervinus tells us that Luther embraced in his own person the

entire physical and spiritual nature of his people and his age. Assuredly he was a German of the Germans, and had that fiery force of will which Germans have delighted to obey in their men of light and leading, from Barbarossa to Bismarck.

Of the rank and dignity that have always accompanied war there had been, for an indefinite length of time, no trace in connection with our Möhra Luthers. An individual bearing the name—one Fabian Luther—had indeed been ennobled by Kaiser Sigismund in 1413. On that occasion a coat or shield of arms was bestowed upon Fabian: two white roses in red field, unstrung cross-bow, and so forth; and an indubitable resemblance has been traced between the roses, cross-bow, and other heraldic insignia of Fabian's shield, and the armorial bearings used, in seals or otherwise, by Luther and his brother James. Some shadow of a connection seems thus to be suggested between Fabian and the Möhra household, from which John Luther came; but it is a shadow merely. Our Luther proclaimed himself a peasant born—the son, the grandson of peasants—a rugged, stiffly-toiling, honest, iron-jointed kindred, found here and there throughout that region of moor and hill, of pine and birch, of hungry plough-lands, of copper and slate strata, of mining and smelting and hammer-swinging industries, which stretches from Möhra, brown and bald, past wooded Eisenach, and so on, north by west, for sixty or seventy miles, to Eisleben and Mansfeld, and the first hollows and heavings of the Hartz.

What brought John Luther, with his young wife, to the northern from the southern edge of the great Thuringian wood? The question would hardly deserve an answer—for why should not a stout young fellow, from purely fortuitous causes, and a pleasurable sense of adventure in pushing his way, seek employment sixty or seventy miles from his birthplace?—were it not that an answer has, somewhat curiously, become necessary. That Witsel, a controversial opponent of Luther's, should, during his life-time, have said that he could call Luther's father a manslayer or murderer, might be passed over as a mere freak of disputatious spite. That an anonymous champion of the Pope, publishing a treatise in Paris after Luther's death, should call him the son of the Möhra manslayer, might be equally unimportant. But when, in an official document, of date 1702,* drawn up by one J. M. Michaelis, on "Copper-mining in the Möhra District," we discover a reference to the story, derived evidently from local tradition, the probability begins to dawn upon us that it had, at least, so much of fact for germ as is commonly indispensable to a myth. The account of Michaelis is that a peasant, herding horses on the moorland, had, by John Luther, without mortal intent, been so severely struck with his own horse-tackle that he died, for which cause John Luther had been obliged to take himself off from Möhra.

In few cases is the ancient and veracious adage that nothing is made of nothing more pointedly true than in

* Note to Köstlin's larger work.

the case of myths. They are, almost without exception, history in disguise. That the evidence which has been cited proves John Luther to have been in some way or other connected with the taking of life seems beyond reasonable doubt. If Witsel spoke from sheer invention, he might have accused Luther himself, as well as his father, of shedding blood. One of the last things in the world likely to occur to a sane man, however great his spite or dark his malignity, would be to try to damage his theological opponent by calling his father—known only as an industrious, peaceable, universally-respected miner of Mansfeld—a murderer. It is significant that the form of Witsel's attack was not direct, but oblique: he "could an' if he would" a tale unfold. The recurrence of the charge in a Parisian book of 1565 tends to show that it had been widely known. One can easily imagine, on the other hand, that Luther, Melanchthon, and all except the basest even among their Papal adversaries, might have good reason for saying nothing about the insinuation of Witsel, although they knew it to be no mere fabrication. There are things about which it is grateful and humane to be silent, although they cast no real slur upon a man. The occurrence, therefore, of Witsel's insinuation in Germany in Luther's life-time, and its recurrence in Luther's century in France, render it probable that there was some fact at its basis; and when, after lapse of a clear century from the sixteenth, the tale crops up afresh in local tradition, we can hardly refuse to admit that the probability approaches

certainty. That the tradition should have quite died out in Möhra and its neighbourhood in the course of the eighteenth century, so that no trace appeared of it in the nineteenth until it had been re-imported—a point on which Köstlin lays stress—does not seriously affect the evidence.

It is beyond question that no guilt of murder attached to John Luther. His coming to the Eisleben district is associated in the tradition—and no doubt the association is correct—with his withdrawal from Möhra. And yet he brought with him no evil report—not the faintest whisper reached Eisleben or Mansfeld that the quietly strenuous watch-dog was a wolf. Nor was there anything in his subsequent career to make it credible that he had come into the district under false colours. He approved himself, by infallible tests, an excellent man. Friendly, diligent, intelligent, devoutly pious, but with an eye of sense in his piety that cleared it surprisingly (for that age) of superstition, and made it work well for this world as well as for the next; stable in all his ways. Nevertheless one can believe that John Luther had a stroke in him. Meek as Moses in his ordinary walk, he bore within him a central fire which, under provocation, might break into flame. One of the qualities that the sure eye of Carlyle read in John Luther's face—which, on the whole, Carlyle much admired—was contentiousness. Short, square-built, iron-fibred, John would, in a moment of uncontrollable choler, be dangerous. If then a misguided mortal, horse-herding in those stony moorlands,

made himself insufferably obnoxious to John, smiting without putting the condition of righteousness first, one can understand that John's passion might reach a paroxysmal pitch, and that, closing with the savage, and wresting from him his own horse-subduing apparatus, he might deal a blow of which he had not measured the force, and find himself victor to an extent that could only distress and appal him.

The theory of guiltless, or, still more, of praiseworthy, manslaughter meets all the requirements of the case. That of deliberate murder—or even of murder on the impulse of the moment—cannot be reconciled with John's conduct in moving to a place so near Möhra as Eisleben, and lying, like Möhra, within Saxon jurisdiction. Mere accident, again, seems incompatible with the circumstance that John Luther struck the fatal blow with horse-harness belonging to the man who fell. A quarrel—a burst of passion—a chance blow, more effective than was meant—such seems to have been the course of the transaction. Sensible, right-hearted people, friends and foes, would feel that John Luther was to be pitied rather than blamed, and all, except a few God-forsaken controversialists, would hold their tongues upon the subject.

So far, we are on solid ground. But imagination, aided by that faculty, whatever it may be called, which engages in the analysis of myths, insists upon prying somewhat farther. The absurdest myth, be it recollected, is seldom fatherless and motherless, seldom absolutely devoid of seed-grains of fact. Even the

Leipzig woman who made the outrageous statement attributed to Margaret Luther touching the paternity of her son may not have been simply, consciously, wholly lying. The woman's fantasy had the advantage —from the myth-maker's point of view—of working upon materials derived from a period preceding, by some five-and-thirty years, that at which the story was brought forward. She said she had received the confession from Margaret's lips in Eisleben. That would confine the date to the months immediately succeeding the birth, for within half a year or so John Luther and his wife left Eisleben for Mansfeld. Is it not possible that the Leipzig narratress may have had some actual hints from Margaret of that quarrel which we suppose to have taken place, and that the public bath and the incubus of the maturely-grown and ugly-featured legend may be the fantastically disguised counterfeits of reality? A public bath was, of course, out of the question in a little cluster of peasants' houses like Möhra. But might there not be a pool, in some green wrinkle of the moorland, where Margaret, innocently bathing or cooling her feet, might attract the evil eye of a horse-herding reprobate? Might not originals be thus afforded for the bath and the incubus? And what realist will be so stern as to forbid imagination from venturing to look one moment longer, and to see, if but in vision, the incubus becoming too profuse in his attentions, and Margaret, alarmed and shrieking, "saved from insult worse than death" by the sudden advent of her true John? The horse-tackle, abandoned

for the nonce by the incubus, would be the handiest implement for administering chastisement. If this view is substantially correct, the verdict of the Möhra community, expressly proved from contemporary records to have had a fondness for rough-handed justice, and to be quick in quarrel, might bring in, with reference to the prostrated incubus, a unanimous verdict of "Served him right." And yet John and Margaret, since folk would be talking, might prefer pitching their tent in Eisleben or Mansfeld to remaining in Möhra.

John Luther's features, as preserved by Kranach, are not beautiful, but bear in every line the stamp of capacity. The face indicates immense power of concentration, with vigilant intelligence and sturdy sense. George Eliot could not have accused it of expressing too much other-worldliness. John Luther had a firm grip on this world, thought that a man was as good as a monk, or better, and stood below, or above, the level of his age in reverence for priests. No softening saintliness, inconsistent with mundane sagacity, no æsthetic sensibility, real or affected, looked through his angular features and tight brown skin. But there is, on the other hand, not the slightest trace, either in his portrait or in his history, of modern free-thinking humour. He was a steadfastly religious man, though with a *minimum* of churchiness, fixing upon the spiritual and everlasting elements in Christianity rather than upon formalities and symbolisms. He was, in fact,—as may surprise those who dream that his son originated Protestantism—what hundreds, nay thousands, of earnest

men throughout Western Christendom had become,—an anticipator of the uprising of Europe against the mediæval system. No instance is on record of the transference of a mere platform plausibility—a mere claptrap of stump oratory—to the field of serious controversy, more egregious than Dr. Newman's expatiation on the newness of Protestantism. Even the name was but the specific application of a habit of speech in use for centuries; and the thing—the yearning, moaning, agonised plaint and protest of Europe against a system that stifled freedom and depressed life—had gone up to heaven from all Christian lands. When Europe rang from Elbe to Tiber with the doctrine of Luther, he had little or nothing to teach his old father. But we must not go too fast. John Luther was a devout man, and thought not, in this year 1483, of any breach with constituted authorities. Accordingly, he takes his son, the day after he was born, to St. Peter's Church in Eisleben, and has him baptised. It is St. Martin's Day, St. Martin of Tours, one of the most ingenuous, kindly, and simple-hearted saints in the calendar; and in honour of him the boy is called Martin.

CHAPTER III.

MANSFELD CRAG AND VALLEY.

A FEW months subsequently to the birth of their son, John and Margaret Luther quitted Eisleben and settled permanently in Mansfeld, a village to the north-west of Eisleben, at the distance of a brisk hour's drive. Here their beginnings were from very small things. So soon as Martin could use his legs, and investigate matters on a small scale with those sparkling, noticing eyes of his, he became aware that his father and mother led a hard life. "My parents," he tells us, "were at the outset desperately put to it. My father was a poor miner, and my mother carried the faggots on her back, to save enough for the education of us children. Their toil was stern and sore—no one works so hard nowadays." That image of the faggot-bearing mother had imprinted itself on the memory of little sharp-eyed Martin, and remains for all time, distinct as a peasant in a picture by Frere or Israels. The child had excellent occasion to learn that life is an earnest matter. Nothing, it would appear, was to be had for nothing; a livelihood must be wrung from the niggard earth, the ore to be had only through digging, the metal to become ductile only through fire, the faggots to melt it being laid on a woman's back. When he saw his mother bend

beneath her load, and the sweat drop from his father's brow, he would realise that life is no promenade or May-game. "No man nor no thing would put on a false face to flatter Martin Luther."

It could not, however, have been very long before there occurred a brightening in the circumstances of his lot. John Luther was not the kind of man to be beaten by circumstances. Clear-eyed to perceive the mark, indomitably persistent in aiming at it, sober, steady, judicious, he soon rose from the crowd of working miners. Martin must have been still a very little boy when Margaret, relieved from painful pressure of toil, could feel life growing quietly pleasant for her, and could move in melodious contentment through the simple round of a German house-mother's duties.

Of her family we know less than of her husband's, interminable disputes being waged even on the subject of her maiden name. Jürgens, immensely laborious, decides for Lindemann, expressly saying "*not* Ziegler"; Köstlin, agreeing in his larger work with Jürgens, thinks rather, in his later and more popular book, that it was Ziegler after all. That Lindemann was, or may have been, John Luther's mother's name seems to be the now accepted argument in favour of the Ziegler hypothesis; but there really is nothing improbable in the idea of a father and son marrying women with the same family name. Happily, the matter is not of the smallest consequence. Margaret Luther was of Eisenach or its neighbourhood, and in pretty much the same rank of life with her husband.

As to her character there is no possibility of doubt. Discerning, deep-thinking John had been eminently right in fixing his affections upon Margaret. The like to like, with subtle spicing of unlike, which is the essential condition of successful matrimony—always a ticklish problem—had drawn him to her. The likeness was the sterling gold of worth in each. But there was unlikeness too. "My Eustace might have sat for Hercules." John was of unbending quality—rock without fountain-dew or ivy garland; not a poetical nature; the back-bone cast-iron. But the face of old Margaret, as Kranach has left it—though Kranach, mind you, was not the man to do such a face justice—might serve for an ideal face of George Eliot's Dinah Morris at sixty. In estimating portraits you have always to consider the portrait-painter. Kranach's fidelity is beyond challenge, but it is the fidelity, or little more than the fidelity, of a photograph. Kranach would never have found a Madonna among the maidens of Urbino; it took a Raphael to do that. Raphael would have made, not perhaps a beautiful, but a gentle, comely, expressive, and noble Madonna-mother out of Margaret Luther. There is a far finer sensibility in the face than in John Luther's, and a more manifest, though entirely unaffected and unconscious, piety; a tremulous tenderness also, suggestive of religious humility and the fear of God to an almost oppressive degree. Plaintiveness very evident, yet not without composure and quiet dignity—not radiancy of joy, but peace. One can understand how this mother, as well

as stiff-necked, unpoetical John, was prepared to sympathise with Martin when he became known as a reformer. When Melanchthon went to see his mother, at the time when the battle between Papacy and Reformation was getting loud, she gave him a prudently pious lecture on the perils of iconoclasm; but Luther's mother never wavered in her loyal trust in Martin.

This was the wife whom John Luther brought to Mansfeld to walk with him in trustful companionship through shine and shower. If there were days in the beginning of their pilgrimage when he, at fall of sun, would be bone-weary, and the plaintive tone in her voice would almost melt into weeping, he soon proved his power to cheer her, and she had the delicious pride of knowing that he was gaining among men the place he deserved. He became the master of two smelting-furnaces, the employer of men, and gradually found himself possessed of leisure enough to devote some of it to the affairs of the town. In our time a man of so much energy and brains would probably emerge altogether from the lower middle-class, and become a mine-owning, metal-working millionaire. No such ambition appears to have occurred to John, nor does he seem to have missed much that pecuniary success of this kind could have won for him in respect of social position. Whether the relations between the several *couches sociales* were in fact more genially fluent, more in accordance with that rule of equality to which Mr. Matthew Arnold attaches so much importance, in the sixteenth century than they are in our vauntedly

democratic age, we need not stay to inquire. There are many circumstances which countenance such a conclusion. John Luther was appointed one of the four councillors who, with a president, ruled the town. None of the Mansfeld magnates declined his intercourse, and the Counts of Mansfeld highly appreciated his worth, and were well pleased to converse with him. His house became a centre of local illumination—the pastor, the schoolmaster, the purveyor of any kind of rational information, welcome to it always.

One can fancy that any vagabond spiritualism—expatriated and forlorn—keeping out of the way of the Inquisition, might find a warm corner at John's fireside. In the furious storm of invective which burst upon Martin when he took up his parable against Rome, the allegation—part conjecture, part invention—was often made that his father was a Hussite heretic, and had inoculated him with the venom. It is not absolutely impossible that a Hussite wanderer may have broken bread at John Luther's table, but the thing is improbable. The Hussites had no hospitality to expect on the side of Germany. Saxons and Czechs are of different and mutually repulsive races, and the valleys and low hills of Thuringia had repeatedly been ravaged by Hussite marauders. The victory of the Council of Constance over Huss was heartily approved of and rejoiced in throughout all German lands. John Luther was a man of rare mental independence and penetration, but if—as is not likely—he had ever questioned the justice of putting

Huss to death, he was still farther ahead of his contemporaries than has been supposed. The shuddering horror and detestation with which men then thought of a heretic can now be specified as a fact, but can no longer be imaginatively realised by any one. It is at all events certain that if John Luther had any sympathy with the Hussites, any lurking suspicion that Huss and Jerome of Prague had been murdered, he did not communicate these audacities of speculative liberalism to his son. The latter cherished a feeling of cordial repugnance to Huss until after the commencement of his public career, and was unaffectedly surprised to hear that there were so many points of contact between his own doctrine and that of men whom he had formerly execrated as pests, and whom he thenceforward honoured as martyrs.

Moral austerity was a characteristic both of John and Margaret, and their love for their first-born took its colour, or rather its direction, from this Spartan attribute. The slightest deviation from the straight line of infantine duty was visited upon the little fellow with unmeasured sternness. John beat him severely enough to alienate for a time his filial affection, and to check and freeze, while boyhood lasted, all outflow of confidence, all effusive unloading of heart and mind, between son and father. Margaret, agreeing with John as to the infinite sternness of moral law, and perhaps, as is not uncommon with persons of tender sensibility, impelled to spasmodic vehemence by sense of the difficulty of being hard, whipped him for some

childish peccadillo—pilfering a nut or sweetmeat—till the blood came. The instrument of castigation seems to have been the *ruthe*, composed of birch-twigs, which is the terror of German nurseries, the twigs having been shred—let us pathetically suppose—from some of those faggots which, as seen on his mother's back, excited the compassion of small Martin, and, through the magic of his pen, have bespoken for Margaret the sympathy of all generations.

The boy, gallant and of strong affections, was not fretted into rebellion by these severities; but they did him no good; and all sensible people will concur in the disapprobation with which he has commented on them. In the maturity of his judgment, and when he possessed the experience of a parent, Luther deliberately censured the discipline to which he had in childhood been subjected. The error of John and Margaret had indeed, he held, been on the right side. Severity, even in excess, on the part of parents, he pronounced to be a trivial fault and mistake, as compared with indiscriminate indulgence. But he decisively blamed the method of unrelaxed strictness and unmitigated punishment. An element of brightness and hope ought always to accompany and to relieve the hardness of law—the rosy-cheeked apple of reward, he said, to lie on the same shelf with the birch-twigs. Luther thought that gloom rested too deeply on his early years; and he was right. Even if we lay it down—as we doubtless must—that education is in its very essence a checking, bridling, regulating, developing, or pruning of nature—even if we hold

that the civilised human being ought, at no period, in no moment, of his life to be a *wild* creature, lawlessly free—we do not escape the ordinance of considering nature, and taking with us so much of her method as may be wisely appropriated.

> "The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
> The young birds are chirping in the nest,
> The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
> The young flowers are blowing toward the west."

How much might have been different if gaiety had been the prevailing tone and habit of life in the Mansfeld cottage of John and Margaret Luther! In that case, the greatest of German reformers might have been also the greatest and joyfullest of German poets. A vein of genuine poetry, derived, one cannot help thinking, from his mother—for John's virtues were prosaic—lay in Martin Luther, a vein which did actually take rhythmic form in some of the strongest religious poetry in modern literature. But the vein lay deep in his nature, far too deep to rise gurgling to the surface in lyric jets of melody, responsive to the mild excitements of common life. It did not make its presence much known until it arose in fierce thrills amid the agitation of conflict. There is in Luther's poetry an exultation of trust in God infinitely deeper and more spiritual than throbbed from the lyre of Pindar—an exultant faith equalled only by that of the Hebrew psalmist. But of that radiation of joy, that focussing and intensifying and flashing around of the bright influences of life, which one expects from a great poet, and

which no poets have more illustriously given than the lyrists of Germany, we have as good as none from Luther.

The gloom of his domestic up-bringing was deepened by his first experiences in school and church. He was mercilessly beaten by his schoolmaster, and that, as his clear consciousness in after years bore witness, for no wilful offence, but merely because he failed to understand what a more patient or a more lucid explanation would presumably have made plain enough. He breaks out into fierce expressions against the pedagogues of the time, calling them tyrants and hangmen.

What is still more important, he was not cheered, but the reverse of cheered, by the religious instruction communicated to him. He did indeed recollect, and to the last gratefully acknowledge, that his Mother Church had taught him the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Creed. In these he was introduced to the essentials of Christian religion. But he was sensible—dimly, of course, and in effect rather than in distinct consciousness—of a vast system that canopied the sky, and cast, for all practical purposes, its colossal shadow upon the Creed, the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer itself. Whatever was named to him as in the strict and final sense Divine, was associated with a transcendency of terror. Remote in the farther heavens, behind muffling clouds of murkiest awe, was the ineffable God, whom no created thing could see and live. But even Christ was no friendly and approachable manifestation of the Divine Power. He too was throned in terror, an iron-featured judge,

whose breath was consuming fire. Only through Mary mother could one safely and hopefully approach Christ Himself. Along with, or in due line of precedence after, the Virgin, the human-hearted saints were to be invoked. This first conception of the Divine, as presented to the mind of a boy of profoundly reverent and religious instincts, had an importance in relation to the history and work of Luther which we cannot over-estimate. In the letter which he addressed to his mother in her last illness he recalls to her mind, as something from which he and she had been graciously delivered, that view of Christ in which He figured not as a Saviour but as a "gruesome judge and tyrant," from whom no tenderness was to be expected, and from whom poor mortals prayed to be shielded by Mary and the saints.

In the afternoon of his years, surveying his early experiences in their completeness, and noting the lines of continuity running through his life, Luther made this remarkable observation:—"My parents were very hard on me, so that I became broken-spirited, and it was from this cause that I subsequently betook myself to a convent." The words at first glance are startling. We pause to ask whether he did not make some mistake in tracing the influences that bore on his main spiritual development; for he did not assume the cowl till the influences and ideas of his Mansfeld life were far behind him, separated by years of assiduous study and genial companionship. But when we reflect deeply we perceive that the remark was most probably just.

There had been a jar in the relations between father and son. The boy could not make a friend of the man, could not confer with him on burdens lying heavy upon the boyish conscience or heart. John, with his clear secular head and strictly limited reverence for priests and monks, could not vouchsafe to Martin that sympathy which the callow, but sincere and intense, devoutness of religious boyhood desires. Pious children of the Martin Luther type cannot have too much religion. They delight in solemn celebrations and cloistral sanctities. It is pretty certain, therefore, that the boy would become higher in his churchmanship than his father. In that letter to his old mother, immediately after referring to the tyrannical judge substituted for the Saviour, he speaks of a "monkish holiness," to be laboriously worked out by a man's own efforts, and by which, according to the system in vogue, the terrific judge was to be propitiated. Since neither John nor Margaret, whatever else they may have taught their son, told him that the spectral Christ, the cruel judge, was a lie, the young boy naturally concluded that it was safest and best for him to believe in the scheme of monkish holiness. He became a better Papist than his father; and in the sessions of silent thought, when Christ above, and parents and schoolmasters below, seemed cruelly hard, the idea rose before him, with some watery beam of hope and comfort, that he might one day withdraw from secularities, and begin a more celestial existence within convent walls. In short, there is sufficient reason to

believe that Martin Luther, in the first period of his life, was less of an iconoclast than of a Galahad.

> "I muse on joys that will not cease,
> Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
> Pure lilies of eternal peace,
> Whose odours haunt my dreams."

John Luther had meanwhile seen to it that the secular education of his son was not neglected. He taught him to read at home, and at a very early age took him to the Latin school of the town. Martin gratefully remembered, during his whole life, the kindness of a neighbour boy named Æmler, who lifted him sometimes in his arms on the way to school. A few years before his death he presented this Æmler with a Bible, expressly connecting the gift with his recollection of this boyish civility. Education in that age, even in the small country towns of Germany, meant education in Latin. In Italy, indeed, modern literature had dawned three centuries before, and suddenly attained meridian splendour in the "Divine Comedy" of Dante. But north of the Alps there was no other language that had a literature except Latin, no other language in which any one thought of giving his children a grammatical training. We are to figure Martin, therefore, conning his Latin horn-books, and painfully making acquaintance with "the musty saw of antique Donate." This was a manual of grammar, dating, in its original form, so early as the close of the fourth century, and which had not undergone revision for hundreds of years. Looking into such a manual, you are prompted to ask

whether the educational authorities of the time thought it desirable that the inevitable difficulty of attacking a foreign language should be made as great for children as possible. Multitudes of the words are contracted, the contractions being indicated by signs; and meagre skeleton-frames of declension vex the memory. Such handbooks would present a reticulation of puzzles, a bramble-thicket or stockade of difficulties, to children of eight or ten. Under such circumstances a peculiarly gentle, patient, firm, and intelligent method of tuition was to be desired; but the method in this Mansfeld school was exactly the reverse. A grammatical manual of the period into which I happened to look is embellished by a wood-cut representing a school-room. In the preceptor's desk is a dismal crone, hook-nosed, with a formidable apparatus of birch-twigs at hand as implement and emblem of her craft.

Martin had no pleasant recollections of his schooling in Mansfeld. He stuck bravely to his tasks, however, and seems to have soon convinced his observant and sharply critical father of his rare intellectual quality. "We shall keep him well clear of monkeries," thought John to himself, "get him, by hook or by crook, enough of learning for a lawyer, and have credit of him one day." John's plan was not irrational, and he was in the habit of sticking to plans once formed; but Martin turned out to be one of those children whose horoscope is difficult to cast.

The crag on which the castle of Mansfeld, or its ruins and restorations, may still be seen, is one of

thousands of the kind in which, in language of stony hieroglyphics, the history of feudal Germany for five hundred years is written: five hundred years — or, probably, a good deal more — during which war-tumult prevailed throughout those lands that are now hushed under the shadow of the great military empire of Germany. When a strong, order-loving man arose, a Henry the Fowler, a Kaiser Otto, or Lòthair, his task was to beat back invading Huns, Sclaves, Czechs, or Wends. One of the castellated crags which, under the surveillance of such Kaisers, and held by men of their appointment, stood to check and curb the Wends towards the Elbe river, was Mansfeld.

At the close of the fifteenth century the actual fighting and converting of Wends had been at an end for some hundreds of years. All detail in connection with the battles and sieges had faded from the general memory. But they lived in a hundred legends, a hundred popular ballads, the successful Kaisers becoming mythic heroes, the defeated Wends and miscellaneous savagery reappearing in picturesque garb as the demons, wizards, dwarfs, and monsters of the world-famous German tales. In the Mansfeld district the last ridges of the Thuringian highlands meet the first spurs of the Hartz. Luther called himself sometimes a Hartzlinger, generally a Saxon; but the whole country of legendary song and saga, from the Brocken, far north, to the Hörselberg, within small distance of Eisenach, where the winds whisper of the wild huntsman Tannhaüser and the true Eckart, was familiar to his imagination and dear

to his heart. In the time of his greatest theological activity, he rather gloomed upon these things as vanities of this world; but when comparatively tranquil days arrived, and the peace of life's afternoon began to recall the interests and affections of its morning, they regained their interest for his mind, and he referred to them in a way that showed how highly he valued them. They may confidently be assigned a place among those influences which combined to make him representatively German; with all the patriotism, all the pride of a German; looking on that general scheme and epic framework of terrestrial affairs in which the German Kaiser and the holy Mother Church reigned as allied powers, with a feeling of blended reverence and admiration akin to that with which he raised his eye to the night heavens and saw the starry charioteer guiding his wain around the pole.

The country about Mansfeld, though there is a certain slimy blackness in the soil that makes it unpleasant for pedestrians in soaking weather, is not bad for fruit and grain, and good for cattle. Green expanses of pasture-land, sloping from watered valleys, afford rich herbage to deep-uddered kine, yielding excellent milk in bounteous quantity. Luther spoke of the abundance of good milk in the region with an animation suggestive of his having keenly enjoyed it in his childhood, and noticed the comfort it afforded to his mother when the flock about her feet had grown to seven. He speaks also of the dairy-maids who carolled at the pail, and of the merry, active, stalwart work-

people in general. This population has in its veins a strong dash of the Frankish blood, sprightly and buoyant. It was an advantage to Martin that he grew up among such stirring and blithesome neighbours rather than among the sombre moorlands round Möhra.

The landscape about Mansfeld derives character in great part from its mining industries. Smoke-clouds rest here and there—on a cloudy day there would be a general dinginess. Bold headlands of slag advance upon the fields. At night the landscape will be lit up with red gleams and glows of furnace fire. In Luther's boyhood the place had more importance as a centre of mining industry than it has at present. Mansfeld is snug and tidy enough, about as pleasant a little town as one can look for in a mining district. It nestles in its deep valley under the castle; you climb the castle crag by winding paths, through shaggy copse, the landscape widening as you ascend. On the summit, the eye ranges, from swells and broad undulations of rather vivid green in the foreground, over more faintly tinted ridges in the middle distance, to grey-blue hills beyond. Immediately below is the village, its sharp-gabled roofs climbing energetically up the steep slope. The old chapel of the castle—where Luther must often have worshipped as a boy and where he repeatedly preached when a man—seems to have undergone no fundamental change. They show a grisly crucifix, understood to be either the same as was adored in the fifteenth century or a facsimile. Sculptures there are of singular coarseness, in red sandstone, recognisable as Joseph of Arimathea, St.

Christopher, and I know not what. This kind of thing the boy Luther saw by way of illustration of the connection between religion and art. The tourist doing the Luther localities seems generally to penetrate no farther than Eisleben, at which one bids adieu to the railway. The Castle of Mansfeld has small attractions as a show-place; but its value as containing authentic memorials of the boy's early life is considerable.

On Mansfeld Crag the Counts Günther had their seat for at least three or four centuries before the birth of Luther. With the decay of feudalism, the importance of their fortress also declined, but they had once been men of no small importance, capable of having quarrels and exchanging blows with Kaisers themselves. Hoyer von Mansfeld, one of the kindred, appears in lays of the twelfth century as a much-lauded hero of romance.* In Luther's boyhood they exercised a sway—partly feudal, partly patriarchal, partly that of the modern squire and landlord—over the little town. When John Luther emerged from the class of hand-workers, and became a burgher and civic official, the Count of the period took note of his eminent quality, and treated him much in the way of a personal friend. When Martin himself began to have his fame and his troubles, the Mansfeld Counts—the family was a large one, with three several branches—took a warm interest in his affairs, being kept up to the mark, perhaps, by vigilant John Luther, and were able to convey to him a hint or two as to perils that might be in the wind. There

* Jürgens

is no proof, no probability, that they possessed anything that would in our times be called culture; but we must reckon it as one of those influences which contributed to the fundamental fashioning of Luther's mind—to its organic structure and fixed ideas—that he saw, during those years when impressions are most profound, a family of ancient descent, part of the feudal aristocracy of Germany, living on entirely genial, human, mutually beneficial, and unstrained relations with his father, a peasant-burgher of Mansfeld.

The Counts, having now small occasion for their battle-harness, and large occasion for ready money, were practically engaged in the business of mining. From them John Luther held the two smelting furnaces to which he owed his modest competence; and one of the accomplishments that are mentioned as having commended him to the Counts was his thorough mastery of the craft by which he lived. During Martin's boyhood, and probably until nearly the end of his course at college, John Luther had enough to do to rear his family of at least seven—possibly eight, or even more. Two of his sons died before attaining manhood. He settled three daughters in marriage, giving, presumably, a dowry with each. His wife, who survived him, was sufficiently provided for, and at her death the property came to 1,250 gulden—say, in modern money's worth, at least a thousand pounds.

We have it on Luther's own authority that until he quitted Mansfeld he was healthy, and we know that in after life he was a constant observer and

unaffected admirer of nature. In the din and stress of theological disputation he loved to have in his hand a flower or green spray, on which his eye might rest with refreshment. There was a brook in the Mansfeld valley—that source of enchantment to adventurous childhood—and we may figure him as a pensively joyful, sociable little fellow, running on the daisied braes, or "paidling in the burn" with Johnny Reineck, the gentle Æmler, or other boy-friends who remained faithful to him through life.

Nor were other elements of pleasantness absent. We saw that Margaret could be severe—a Spartan mother, on occasion. Anything like a breach of moral law seems to have awakened such a sense of infinite horror both in John Luther and in her that they made no allowance for mortal frailty or infantine keenness of appetite. But we are not required to believe that there was anything stern in Margaret's habitual demeanour. If John Luther taught Martin to read, we may presume that it was she who taught him to pray and to sing. Spalatin, one of Luther's most intimate friends, first saw Margaret when her son was thirty-nine years old, but he then pronounced the likeness between mother and son surprisingly close. It embraced not only the features, but the figure and carriage. Some readers, recalling the sprightly verse in which Goethe traces his characteristics to father and mother respectively—his earnestness to the one, his brightness and buoyancy to the other—may suggest a similar apportionment

in the case of Luther. We may venture to believe, at least, that it was Margaret who taught him to sing those Christmas carols, those four-voiced hymns in honour of the Babe born at Bethlehem, which in boyhood he used, with other boys of his own age, to sing in the streets or in the outskirts of the town. On one occasion the boy-friends were singing near the door of a peasant's house on the edge of the town, probably in the dusk, when a rugged man sallied forth, and with gruff, loud voice, cried out, "You young rascals, where are you?" The boys, like startled birds, took to flight. But the man did not pursue. An Orson-like burst of laughter proclaimed that his intents were not wicked, but charitable. They ventured to approach, and were rewarded with the characteristically German treat of sausages hot from the fire.*

The sunshine in such a life as the boy Luther's would be by the day or week, the gloom only in despondent moments, in bad quarters of hours. We expressly learn that when the little ones began to cluster about the hearth, Margaret willingly availed herself of Martin's help to keep up order and brightness, and trusted him to be an ensample to the flock. His kindly way with his little brothers and sisters is attested on good authority, and might have been

* Köstlin thinks that this incident belongs to a later stage than the Mansfeld one. This is possible; but, surely, if Martin was a stout lad of fourteen or upwards, with comrades to match, it is not likely that he and they would have been so easily frightened.

inferred from his gentle and sympathetic manner with children in after life. When all has been said as to the hardness of his up-bringing; when we have with delicate candour and sympathy considered his complaint of having had his spirit, in part at least, broken; we are bound to remember that, in the issue, he was *not* a shy, tongue-tied, and diffident man, but very much the reverse.

Among the imaginative harmonies of affection and of habit which knit up life into unity, none is more pathetically human than that which links the memories of childhood with those of manhood, and joins in tender modulation of household peace the years of the growing boy to those of the grey head. This harmony, though at one time it seemed not improbable that serious discord might arise between Martin and his father, continued in his case unbroken. The boy who had been so meekly obedient to John and Margaret stepped suddenly into eminence and influence among his countrymen; but never for a moment did he cease to honour as well as love the father and mother in quiet Mansfeld Valley. Then he joined in stern encounter and perilous conflict with principalities and powers, and many howled and gnashed their teeth at him as a heretic whom it would be virtuous to burn; but never did John or Margaret shrink from his side. Luther did not die by fire. On the contrary, he was victorious over his enemies and gainsayers. When his fame had filled Europe, when he had become practically the sovereign head and law-giver of a renovated

Church, when it fell to him to dictate a marriage service in the forms and terms of which the Protestants of the Fatherland should henceforward be wedded, he immortalised his love for his father and mother, and virtually declared them exemplary as Christian man and wife, by framing the decisive question of acceptance and surrender thus:—"Wilt thou, John, take to wife Margaret?"

And if these words represent the serenest joy and peace of Luther's victory, may we not dare to believe that, in the swelling wave of faith, courage, and heavenward aspiration on which, in the moment of fiery conflict and imminent peril, his soul rose highest, there also mingled associations of his boyhood? The influence was, of course, in the nether springs of the spiritual nature, far below the conscious workings of memory; but one cannot help thinking that if the boy had not looked up for fourteen years of his life to a castellated feudal crag as the image and embodiment of commanding strength, the man might not have chosen precisely *those* words in which to uplift the most sternly exultant battle-song chanted by any religious poet since the Psalmists of Israel:—*Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* (Our God, He is a mighty rock).

CHAPTER IV.

MAGDEBURG.

The first period, then, of life is, for Martin Luther, past. At fourteen the last stages of childhood have been left behind, and the boy begins, in his whole complex nature, body and spirit, to be visited by those prescient beams of consciousness, those solemn whisperings in the recesses of his breast, which tell him what it is to be a man. In the first period the young human creature has taken over from the parent stock what may be styled its outfit and capital, its heritage of bone and brain, its fundamental traits, physical and mental. But the use the future man will make of these must depend upon elements which, even in their recipiency, have more of an individual influence than belongs of right to the nursery period. Audacities of hope and visions of improvement now ruffle the placid acquiescence and contentment of the child; and the smooth surface of the stream of life is broken into sunny and splendid ripplings. Gradually —though this may not be for years—the lightning of new ideas flashes in the sky of the mind. The infallibility of the father is now gravely doubted; and passionate enthusiasms, either for persons or for principles, begin to dispute the throne of the breast with gentler affections for a mother or a sister.

In the first period of life the father's house is incomparably the best place of abode. In the second period a rupture, more or less complete, of home associations is not undesirable. The time has come for the boy to step out a little on his own account; to let go the paternal or maternal hand; to stand erect. The time has come, too, for cultivating fellowship; for acquiring the art of being familiar, but by no means vulgar; for learning to give and take in social banter and post-prandial argument; differing without disagreement, and agreeing without sycophancy. The softness, the sensitiveness, the conceit, the affectation, the shyness which haunt the home-staying youth can have no corrective so effectual as the friction of intercourse in circles well removed from that of the domestic hearth.

John Luther, who, we may reasonably infer, had already detected the ability of his son, was quite capable of perceiving that the boy of fourteen could not get much more from his Mansfeld schoolmaster. A good report reached him of the educational advantages of Magdeburg. Thither he sent Martin. John Reineck, the son of a well-to-do burgher of Mansfeld, accompanied him, the plan being, doubtless, the result of consultation between the fathers. It is believed—nothing is specifically known on the subject—that the boy-friends made the journey on foot, and that they went forth pretty much as ravens leave the nest, with cordial wishes from the old ones that they might prosper, and almost nothing more. "Learning is to be had at Magdeburg. Seek it, brave boys. Men have Christian

bowels, and will not let you starve; merchants of light will not slam their doors in the face of ingenuous youth, although they do not bring with them ass-loads of silver." Such, the biographers agree, was, in net result, with perhaps a dollar or two in cash, the *viaticum* with which the Mansfeld parents dismissed their sons.

It is interesting to know that this equipment proved sufficient. Christian Europe was really more of a home for its general population in those times than it is now. A boy who, in reasonably clear and melodious voice, uplifted a hymn before a farmer's or villager's door, when the sun was going down, and who, when the hymn was ended, asked for bread in the name of God, was not likely to have to go much farther that night, or to be sent supperless to bed. And in large towns like Magdeburg there was no lack of foundations, more or less monastic in character, with schools attached, to which access depended on an honest wish to learn. Accordingly, we find that Martin and his friend did not starve, though they probably endured considerable hardship, and that Magdeburg afforded them facilities in the way of tuition.

We must content ourselves, as materials for realising Luther's life in Magdeburg, with the few references he makes to it in his letters, works, and conversations, and the inferences to be rationally drawn from these. In 1522, one Claus Sturm, the burgomaster of the town, wrote to him, censuring his controversial vehemence, and saying that he had known him in his boy-

hood. Luther, with whom this of his vehemence was at that time a sore point, on which no one who was not "very much a friend indeed" could touch safely, rejoined in terms of somewhat strained politeness. His letter consists mainly of a sharp argumentative declinature of the burgomaster's admonition; but he remarks in the outset that he had indeed seen Sturm sometimes at Dr. Mosshauer's table, never in Sturm's own house, at the time when he and John Reineck went to the school of the "Null Brothers."* Dr. Mosshauer was an ecclesiastic, filling some official post, and it is conjectured that the Mansfeld boys were admitted to free table at his house. The Brothers at whose school they attended were one of the many societies of the period occupied in teaching and other good works.

The town had not a little to show of that quasi-celestial perfectness of Christian devotion which Martin regarded in his heart with profoundest reverence. Among the figures which remained vividly impressed upon his memory was that of the Franciscan, Prince William of Anhalt-Bernburg, as he once saw him in the streets of Magdeburg. Prince William was one of three brothers whom their father, bent upon shielding them from sins of youth to which he had himself fallen victim, had dedicated to the Church. William had now for nearly twenty-five years worn the Franciscan cowl, and gone, like the Franciscans generally, barefoot. "I saw him with these eyes," said Luther thirty-five years afterwards, "in the cowl of a Barefoot, on the

* De Wette, 409.

streets, begging for bread, carrying the sack, and bent by it towards the earth." The Barefoot Prince performed all the drudgeries of the convent; and what with fasting, night-watching, and self-castigation, looked the image of death—sheer skin and bone. Being constitutionally incapable of such sufferings, he soon after died. All who saw him took him for a pattern of supreme holiness, and were ready to swoon with transports of reverent admiration. Virtue of this hypermundane quality was supposed by the crowd of ordinary observers to be pre-eminently pleasing to God, and an infallible password to heaven.

Another reminiscence of his sojourn in Magdeburg he has deemed worthy of mention. He saw a painting, executed probably on some church panel. It showed a great ship, representing the Catholic Church, which had on board the Pope, the cardinals, and a company of bishops, with the Holy Ghost for pilot. The crew consisted of priests and monks. Not a single layman was on board. The ship sailed towards the celestial regions. Laymen were to be seen amid the waves, struggling in the water, some drowning, some making an attempt to swim, some clinging to ropes and cords which the ecclesiastical voyagers threw out to them. The only chance for these reprobates was that they might hook themselves on to the ecclesiastical ark of salvation. How safe, thought Martin, how blessed, are the Pope, the bishops, the priests, the monks, as compared with those who pursue mere secular vocations!

If—as is not unlikely—John Luther had deemed it

probable that the bustle, noise, industrial and commercial activity of a large town would tend to put morbid and monkish notions out of his boy's head, he was evidently mistaken. Perhaps he found out his mistake, and therefore decided to change his plan. But there may have been other reasons for terminating Martin's residence in Magdeburg. We hear of his having been ill. Ratseberger, who was Luther's medical adviser at a subsequent period, and who has left interesting memoranda of his patient, states that during his stay in Magdeburg he underwent a severe attack of fever. One symptom was torment from burning thirst. He was medically forbidden, under the sternest injunctions, to drink water. But one day, seizing a favourable occasion, he got out of bed, and managed to crawl on hands and feet to the kitchen. There he found a vessel of water, and took a long, delicious draught. Nature proved to be wiser than medical art. Crawling back with difficulty to his bed, he sank into a deep sleep, and when he awoke the fever had left him.*

Though John Luther may have been disappointed in the educational efficiency of his boy's Magdeburg teachers, and though Martin may himself have consciously retained few impressions of the place except those of an ecclesiastical character, we cannot believe that the lad did not derive an expanding and invigorating influence from a year's life in such a town. For the period, Magdeburg was an important place. In its busy streets swarmed a population of forty thousand. From it, as a commercial

* "Luther und seine Zeit. Ratseberger." Neudecker.

centre and depôt, radiated many great roads. Not only boats, but considerable vessels, floated towards it on the Elbe. It was, moreover, a garrison town, with sounds of military music, glitter of military weapons and uniforms. It abounded with churches, and had been the scene of much preaching of a quality so evangelical as to be gloomed upon by the Papal authorities. Of this, curiously enough, Martin seems to have remained perfectly unaware; and those of his biographers who give us laborious descriptions of the preachers of Magdeburg whom he might have heard are forced to add that he did *not* hear any of them. Above the churches rose the great cathedral, its two colossal towers seeming to preside in majestic silence over the town. Whatever might be the conscious reminiscences of Luther, no doubt can be entertained that so varied, stirring, and imposing a spectacle as the life of a city like Magdeburg, presented to him for a whole year, at the time of life when recipiency is eager to grasp and tenacious to hold, had a powerful effect upon his mind. Whatever teaches a boy to understand and sympathise with men is a part of his education; whatever enabled this boy in particular to understand the ways of Germans contributed to the general result of placing him in touch with his countrymen, and enabling him to be a pulse to chronicle the beating of the heart, a voice to utter the thought and the will, of Germany.

CHAPTER V.

EISENACH.

Nothing is known with certainty as to the causes that induced John and Margaret to take Martin at the end of one year from Magdeburg, and it were idle to speculate upon the subject. Likely enough, Magdeburg had been suggested by the Reinecks; for John Luther, when he perceived the necessity of finding better schooling for Martin than Mansfeld could afford, would naturally bethink himself not of Magdeburg, but of Eisenach. If not exactly his native town, Eisenach was so near Möhra that he may be thought to have looked on it with that mixture of pride and affection with which the peasant regards the considerable town that stands nearest to his ancestral hamlet. It was probably in Eisenach that he first became conscious of his power to grapple with the world, and wooed and won his Margaret, who had relatives there. It was thence that he and she started on the northward journey that ended at Mansfeld. Martin now set his face to the south, as they had set theirs to the north, turning to the country of his kindred, as Jacob did when he left Isaac and Rebecca.

Weary and footsore the boy entered Eisenach; nor

was his welcome warm. His relatives, both on the father's and the mother's side, were poor, and they seem to have thought that it would have been as well if John and Margaret had kept their lad at home. It was necessary for Martin to uplift his voice in the highways, asking bread in the name of God. At Magdeburg he had possessed the priceless advantage of a comrade and a friend—John Reineck—whose worth he attested by loving him until the end of his life. He was now alone, the coldness of his relatives only deepening the chill, and quickening the consciousness, of solitude. He did not, however, want much. Crusts of bread, bits of broken meat, a share in the portion of the house-dog—this was all he asked for. He described himself, long afterwards, with a touch of noble pride rather than with any meanness or weakness of shame, by the old German term for which we have, so far as I am aware, no equivalent in English, *parteken-hengst*: one who gets broken victuals and remainders. Of these, the very smallest allowance capable of supporting human life would have sufficed for Martin. At this time, indeed, he may not have been so well seasoned in the endurance of famine as he afterwards became; but Melanchthon, who knew him well, says that he could go for four days without meat or drink, and that he could always dine sufficiently on a herring and a morsel of bread.

Flights of sentimental pathos are indulged in by the tragic muse of Germany when she beholds young Luther vainly asking for bread in the shadow of the Wartburg, and in streets over which hovers the spirit of Saint

Elizabeth of Thuringia. But the British reader will probably content himself with the fact, stated with manful brevity by Luther, that on his first arrival in Eisenach he was so pressed by want that he seriously entertained the thought of throwing down book and pen, relinquishing the joys and hopes of scholarship, and going back to take a place with his father at the furnace. Before Martin reached this point he must have suffered shrewdly.

The darkness of the hour preceding the dawn brings with it the compensation of lending the dawn a charm of contrasted brilliance and of sweet surprise. One day the boy had sung before three doors, and had been repulsed from them all. Had a fourth appeal proved fruitless, how much might have been different! It is not fanciful to suppose—the result, as well as the previous disappointment, warrants the suggestion—that when he raised his voice at a fourth door, there was in the tone a peculiar depth of expression, a quaver of pain and sorrow, too mournful for so young a singer. It fell upon a sympathetic ear. Ursula Cotta, wife of Conrad Cotta, a citizen of noble family enriched by commerce, looked from the window or the door. She recognised a boy whose earnest, modest appearance, piercing accent in prayer, and clear intensity in singing, had struck her when she had seen him at church among the choir-boys. She not only relieved him, but spoke to him, and took him into the house.

Of the details of this first interview we are ignorant, nor can we trace the stages of the intimacy which

followed. But the issue is known to all the world. Frau Cotta found in the gravity, the good sense, the gentleness, the pious affection of Martin a charm that won her heart. He was so far from the Mansfeld cottage in which alone, it seemed, were any that cared for him! She took him home to her altogether, admitting him to her society and table, and becoming to him a second mother.

It was a great change. For Luther the day had broken and the singing of birds had come. Ursula Cotta was in all senses a lady; and the circle in which she moved, and to which she introduced Martin, was the highest of the town and neighbourhood. She soon learned to regard him with deep affection, mingled, it would appear, with a sense of something about him of an almost sacred character.

She seems to have been a woman of clear and strong judgment, as well as of sincere devoutness, and there are some grounds for believing that she detected the vein of morbid and ascetic religiousness in young Luther. With the intuitive glance of healthy womanhood, she perceived that he was hankering after better bread than could be baked of wheat, better beauty than was painted on the lilies of the field or on happy human faces; that he placed a higher value on the sanctity which isolated men from joys provided by nature and by God than on the sanctity which accepted gratefully what had been provided bountifully. Fresh from Magdeburg, he brought with him airs of priestism, setting the artificial heaven of the

convent above the natural heaven of the home. She told him that there was no more precious thing under the sun than woman's love, if a man possessed it in the fear of God. At the time, our Galahad was sensible of a mitigated degree of shock—the words had a natural virtue and common sense in them which, to his high-flying spiritual sensibility, savoured of worldliness. Luther tells us that when a boy he held it almost a sin for him to think of entering the married state. It was not the only point in which his boy-nature resembled Dr. Newman's. But the day was coming when he would place the saying of Ursula Cotta side by side with Solomon's eulogy of a good woman among those worthy to stand for the perennial admonition and admiration of mankind.*

We made no attempt to analyse Martin's impressions of Eisenach when, first approaching, footsore and anxious, he raised his eyes to the overhanging Wartburg. But now that his troubles are at an end, and when serenity within may dispose him to welcome sweet influences from without, we must spare a few moments to have a look at the locality. Whatever may have been the depressing effect of his earliest experiences, he soon became enthusiastic in his admiration of Eisenach, and called it henceforward his beloved town. The four intervening centuries have not effaced the charm—varied, rich, harmonious—which justified his warmth. No boy of sensibility could know it well and not dream of it for ever. On the edge of the highlands of

* Commentary upon Prov. xxxi. 10.

Thuringia—a jewel on the great green robe of the Thuringian wood—with everything of the hills except their grandeur and terror, everything of the valleys except their gloom—Eisenach is a place to which one would send a young lyric poet or any imaginative and noble boy. The town sits in a lovely plain, through which glides a stream, too large for a brook, too small for a river, but very well in its place. The hills around, fledged with pine and birch, and a rich variegation of other trees, are high enough to lend a highland changefulness to the climate, to attract the trailing draperies of rain-cloud, and afford scope for pageantry of sun and shower and rainbow-gleam, but not high enough to attain the dignity of mountains. Conspicuous is the Wartburg, crested with buildings whose first foundations were laid a thousand years ago, and invested with richly-varied wood. At the foot of the Wartburg run valleys—or one long valley, the Marien-Thal and the Anna-Thal opening into each other—of singular beauty. Never did the present writer see spring flowers so vividly tinted, the gold of the cowslip seeming to be intensified into keener burning by rivalry with the moss that clothes the almost meeting cliffs and is kept brilliantly fresh by the perpetual oozing and dripping, in millions of crystal threads and diamond drops, of moisture from above. Water-ousels flit along the face of the little stream, not too timidly to forbid your approaching sufficiently near to note the clear dark-and-bright of their breasts. Water-wagtails leap airily from stone to stone, poising themselves, every third stone, that you

may admire the brightest blue of wing, the brightest yellow of leg and breast, ever attained to by the bird. On the sides of the valley, here and there, are scalps of crag, with broad green spaces and tufts of wood between. Through this valley Martin must have passed to and fro when he went to see his friends at Möhra. The steeps and hollows of the Wartburg offer endless opportunities for climbing and exploring, and, for a boy of adventurous and imaginative disposition, would have an enchantment like that of Salisbury Crags for young Walter Scott.

Such was the scene in which Martin entered upon the most genially pleasant period of his whole life—that of his residence with the Cotta family. We shall not easily exaggerate the advantages which that connection was fitted to bestow upon him. Exactly at the time when the roughness of his peasant up-bringing might have co-operated with his own taciturn and meditative tendencies to produce a loutish demeanour, he entered the society of men and women of refinement. Vulgar he could by no possibility have been, but he might have been uncouth and embarrassed. There was no grade of society in which, in his subsequent life, Luther did not show himself capable of being perfectly at ease. Nothing of sterling and precious quality that he had brought with him from the household of John and Margaret was lost; but the home-bred worth, the rustic honour and simplicity, were subjected to a delicate polishing which heightened their beauty and attractiveness. The house of Ursula Cotta was properly his

second home, not nobler than the first, but of gentler, happier influence. The boy's heart was not closed against his peasant father and mother: in a good heart there are many mansions, capable of holding many affections, the new not driving out the old, but taking place beside them in a larger, sunnier air.

To this time may be confidently referred the early development of his gift in music. He had a clear, perhaps somewhat thin, but deeply expressive voice—a strong alto, of good tone, says one biographer—and Melanchthon declares it to have been audible "very far." It is now that he is supposed to have begun to practise instrumental music. Ursula Cotta put the flute into his hand.* The literal fact is possible, and so true is it in a wider sense that our good Jürgens may be indulged in his little bit of poetical biography. But if any reader insists on believing that it was not from his second mother, but from Margaret herself, that he received his first flute, there can, at least, be no debate as to the importance of the part played by music in the life of Luther. It was for him, more than any earthly thing, the image of Divine gladness—of that joy which is healing and holy, which scares the spectres that vex the soul, and is a winning voice to draw down the angels of God. Among modern men there has been none for whom music retained so much of that sacred potency ascribed to it in the antique ages when seer and minstrel were almost interchangeable terms. It was no metaphorical flourish in which Luther indulged—it was

* *Frau Cotta in Eisenach gab ihm die Flöte in die Hand.*—Jürgens.

the statement of what he, proceeding upon many experiences, held to be an established fact—that the devil fled from the sound of his flute.

Of Ursula Cotta one thinks as a wise, gentle, solicitous German lady-of-the-household, a realisation, without fantasticalities and eccentricities, of the semi-mythical Saint Elizabeth of the Wartburg—a saint of homely ways, a saint such as Holbein might have placed upon his canvas, not in resplendent beauty, but in a loveliness chastened and expressive, in lines of quiet dignity, in tones of silver grey.

To the other advantages of his stay in Eisenach we are to add the highly important one of better schooling than he had hitherto enjoyed. The tyranny and block-headism that vexed him at Mansfeld were replaced by civility and fair intelligence. Trebonius, rector of the St. George's School, which he is known to have attended, has left behind him a faint shimmer of reputation as pedagogue and Latin poet. He must, indeed, have had about him something of that childishness, curiously combined with pomposity, that simplicity, mildly suggestive of senility, which is apt to characterise elderly schoolmasters. On entering a class-room he would ostentatiously take off his hat; and when some obsequious bystander, probably of the usher species, put the expected question why one so high and mighty should bare his head in the presence of school-boys, he answered that among the sitters on those benches might be some destined to figure as burgomasters, chancellors, or famous doctors. He had, however, good skill in Latin, and

some tincture of Humanist enthusiasm for classic literature. He wrote Latin not in prose only, but in verse, and doubtless spoke it with fluency. It seems to have been his ambition as a teacher to turn out good Latin scholars. Under his auspices, Martin began to get a grasp of the Roman tongue, and to use it in a way that already, to hearing ears, gave hint of eloquence. Probably, indeed, he had heard it talked in a fast and loose way by monks and priests at Mansfeld, and with more care in his school at Magdeburg. He may thus have picked up a smattering of colloquial Latin. Under Trebonius he would find it becoming to him a second mother tongue. It was indeed at that time the language of educated Europe; and if we want to have a clear idea of the Europe of Luther's youth, we must realise what this meant. Latin had never ceased to be a spoken language. Retained by the Church in her services, which conscientious parish priests and devout monks would take care to explain to the people—taught in a way that would not have satisfied Priscian, but may have been, for talking and understanding purposes, not ineffective, in every village school of the slightest pretensions—employed in all public documents and in every ceremonial speech—the language of the Vulgate and of all theology—the language in which scholars conducted tournaments of disputation—the language of cultivated friendship, in which student addressed student, and learned men in all countries carried on correspondence, it may be roughly described as the universal speech of the Middle Ages. No rustic was too abject to

have some sprinkling of Latin, for the poorest might put up for the night at a convent, and would thus know what the *pittantia* and the *avragium*, which have long since fossilised into "pittance" and "average," meant. Learning Latin to a great extent as a spoken language —which, since the school books were in Latin, was a practical necessity—boys of fifteen or sixteen would enter on the classic authors without any sense of foreignness, and almost none of difficulty. The edge of their intellectual appetite was not taken off by acquaintance with a native literature. They came to Virgil and Livy as an intelligent English boy comes to Milton or Clarendon, Scott or Macaulay. Virgil, in particular, whose grave and gentle spirit, high moral tone and instinctive reverence, made him the natural ally of priestly scholars and scholarly priests, was the object of almost adoring enthusiasm in the mediæval centuries. Virgil was a life-long favourite with Luther.

And so we must quit Eisenach, turning the leaf on one of the pleasantest episodes in his life. It is pathetic to think how little we know of it. So much of interesting detail there must have been that has been irretrievably lost. The limitary dates, a few jottings of fact—points of emergent rock in a wide lake that has flooded a valley—alone remain to us. He went in 1497; he left in 1501. He suffered grievously at first. His hardships passed utterly and finally away with the first touch of Ursula Cotta's hand. There must have been visitings to ancestral Möhra; there must have been long summer trudgings to the old folk and the

brothers and sisters at Mansfeld; but we have record of none.

Without question, he had begun to make himself known as a youth of mark before leaving Eisenach. Melanchthon expressly denotes the Eisenach period as that in which his inborn eloquence attracted notice. His faculties in general asserted their power, and carried him to the front rank among his school-fellows. He made friends. Two of these, John Braun, vicar in Eisenach, and Conrad, sacristan of one of the churches, whom he describes simply as his relation, were, six years afterwards, among his closest friends. This is proved by the terms of his letter to Braun, inviting him to witness his assumption of priest's orders. The letter is important on another account. From it we learn that he had other friends in Eisenach to whom he felt himself under obligation, and whom he highly esteemed, but who did not stand with him on quite the same footing of sympathy and agreement as Braun and Conrad. The ray of light thus cast upon his life in Eisenach will be eagerly followed by those who really care to trace the history of his mind. He knows for certain that Braun and Conrad take sufficient interest in his affairs, and are sufficiently of his mind and heart in religious matters, to come to Erfurth on the occasion alluded to. But he hesitates to invite those other friends. The reference to them occurs in a postscript to his letter, the reflection having obviously occurred to him that Braun might expect him to say something about their coming or not coming. What he

says is this :—" The Schalbensian Collegians, best of men as they are, and deserving of all possible civility from me, I do not dare to burden with an inopportune invitation. I am persuaded that it would not suit their dignity to be invited to an affair of so humble concernment, to be bothered, in short, by being asked to witness the assumption of priestly vows by a monk now dead to the world. My mind, besides, is haunted with some faint shadow of doubt as to whether it would gratify or annoy them to be asked. I have thought it best, therefore, to make no sign. On all fitting occasions, however, you are to testify, please, my sense of obligation to them."*

One would think that the meaning of this is plain enough; and it is an illustration of the way in which German editors, painstaking beyond praise or emulation, sometimes miss particular points, that we are told, in the few words of summary prefixed to the letter in De Wette's edition, that Luther expresses in this postscript a "modest wish that the members of the Schalbensian College might also be present." That is exactly the thing he does *not* do. What he expresses is the consciousness that, while full of respect and goodwill for his Schalbensian friends, he cannot trust them to respond to his feelings and to care for his concerns so heartily as

* *Schalbense Collegium, optimos illos homines, de me certe quam optime meritos, importune onerare non audeo, quod mihi omnino persuaserim, eorum ordini et dignitati non pulchre congruere, ad tam humilis obsequii negotium accersiri, imo ad monachi, mundo nunc mortui, vota molestari: pendet præterea animus meus, et dubiusculus est, gratumne sit illis an molestum. Quare obmutescere mihi consului, gratitudinem tamen meam erga eos, dum locus postulaverit, declares velim.*—De Wette, 1.

Braun and Conrad. His reference to his position as a monk, dead to the world, suggests that the members of the Schalbensian College did not entirely sympathise with him as to the nothingness of things of this world and the spiritual glories of monkhood.

And what was this College? The interest of the question will be perceived when it is mentioned that Ursula Cotta's maiden name was Schalbe, and that the College was an institution, partly educational, partly in the nature of an asylum, founded by the Schalbe family. Now, the one recorded utterance of Dame Cotta to Martin was a commendation of one of the supremely good things of *this* world—to wit, married love—and Martin seems to have understood at the time that the remark was intended to be the least little delicate prick of reproof for his monkish airs and ascetic scorn of mundane joys. Though the influence of Eisenach generally, and in particular the influence of Ursula Cotta's circle, tended to cheer and animate him, to dispel sombre thoughts and promote healthful activity and vivacity, there was no lack in the town and neighbourhood of those priestly and conventual influences which, both at Mansfeld and at Magdeburg, had made the deepest impression on his mind. The party that set its face against new ideas—the party of blind devotion to Pope, to priest, to monk, to the whole Roman system—was strong in Eisenach. The place was crowded with churches and chapels. No fewer than nine convents were established in the town or its vicinity. The Cottas, the Schalbe College, seem to have belonged to

the Progress party. Dame Cotta and the collegians, while setting no measure to their kindness to Martin, may have felt—and the keen-eyed, noticing, reticent boy may have been well aware that they felt—rather disappointed by his punctilious asceticism and resolute other-worldliness. In all advancing and wide-awake towns of the period there was, on the one hand, a reactionary party—a Papal party; and, on the other hand, a Liberal party—an anti-Roman party. Names and badges had hardly been adopted on either side; but the division existed. Martin, whose idea of the Divine had from childhood been warped by an excess of terror, and whose profoundly religious nature found satisfaction in unquestioning submission to authority, and in monastic improvements on common-place virtue, stood firmly by the old symbols and watchwords. The bright spirits of the Cotta circle and of the Schalbe College were prompted to remark, with a sigh, that it was a pity a lad so clever, so affectionate, capable of jets of eloquence, and with eyes that sparkled like the eyes of genius, should be but a monkish creature after all, and should give superior people no hope of seeing him on the side of reform. At no period of his career —the fact must be distinctly admitted, whether we applaud or regret it—had Martin Luther the slightest predisposition to free-thinking, or even to fast-thinking. Conservative instincts had a mighty grasp upon him in his youth; and we shall find that, for all his iconoclasm, they were not extinguished in his age.

It was not until Ursula Cotta had been six years in

her grave that Luther, by issuing his Theses, took the step which placed him at once at the head of the party of Reform in Germany and in Europe. There is no evidence that she learned to look upon him in any other light than as a shy, taciturn, deep-hearted boy, whose sense of the religion of gladness was too weak and estimate of cloistral pieties too high, but whose affections, though not effusive, were unchangeable, and whose general worth was as the finest gold. On her death-bed, in 1511, she spoke of him, naming him by his boy-name, and saying that God had singularly blessed her since she had taken Martin under her roof. It is a testimony entirely conclusive, as well as most beautiful, that a saintly purity of morals characterised him—that he was indeed a Galahad. A devout woman, in the solemn hour of death, deliberately expressed the opinion that God had smiled upon her—visited her with more than her natural share of sunlight—because she had been good to His child, Martin Luther.

CHAPTER VI.

ERFURTH.

Farewell, then, to lovely Eisenach, and to the kind people whose help came when so sorely needed. A third journey—a third time in quest of knowledge—is undertaken by Martin. From Mansfeld he had struck northwards to Magdeburg; from Magdeburg, probably resting for a few weeks at Mansfeld on the way, he had come south to Eisenach; and now he sets his face to the east, and, after traversing some thirty miles of road, finds himself at the gates of Erfurth University. In the first year of the sixteenth century—probably in July — a brown-complexioned, hard-fibred, deep-thoughted lad of eighteen, who can speak Latin, sing, play the flute, and generally impress people with the idea that he is somewhat, approaches this far-famed seat of the higher culture. "The University of Erfurth," said Martin long after, "enjoyed such distinction that all others were, in comparison, mere village schools." His name appears twice in the University books, spelt differently each time, and neither spelling that which has since prevailed, "Ludher" and "Luder."

It seems likely that, at least in the second half of his stay in Eisenach, his father had made some

contribution to his maintenance. John Luther had been prospering in the world, and he was now able to defray the expenses—doubtless very modest—of his son's residence in Erfurth. John's views as to Martin were definite and clear. No clerical career, not even that of a bishop, had any attraction for this inveterate layman. Bishop, parson, monk, what were they, he asked, but people who got their bread by talking, while others worked for it? If Martin had brains, and must spin them into words, let him study law, help men to get a scantling of justice, and rise by making himself useful.

We do not hear that Martin entered into any disputes with his father, but it was not of law that he thought in his moments of most earnest aspiration and deepest enthusiasm. He did, for a time, address himself to the study of jurisprudence, but his heart was never in the business, and no sure marks of its influence upon his mind can be traced in his subsequent career.

Universities appealed to high-minded youths in the beginning of the sixteenth century even more than now. They were reverenced as sharing, in virtue of their character as treasuries of light, that authority in relation to truth which mediæval Christendom looked upon as centred in and derived from God. Monarchs took their opinion, as against that of the Pope himself, on the assumption that the opinion most in accordance with light possessed Divine authority. Universities, like General Councils, were, in a vague but practically

potent way, checks upon the Papal tyranny, and averted that consummation of spiritual inanition, the contented acceptance of a sham infallibility. But the Universities laid claim more expressly than this implies to a certain sacredness of character. Having risen up in the shadow of convents, taking it as their primary function to educate ministers for the Church and produce learned divines, qualified to confer with bishops and pontiffs on theological questions, the Universities esteemed themselves no mere secular institutions. The entire circle of their activities was consecrated. We cannot err in supposing that this aspect of things was present to the mind of Luther when he entered the University. Matthesius tells us that he was exemplary in his attendance at college services, and made a point of beginning his studies with prayer.

Among the students of Erfurth were to be found the *élite* of the youth of Germany. The future princes and counts of the Fatherland flocked thither from the towns and castles where the exalted families of Saxony, Hesse, Baden, Anhalt, Hohenzollern, and others, had their seats. It is no forced or far-fetched idea that the singular power of understanding and influencing princes which Luther afterwards displayed may have been promoted by his intimacy with nobles and princes at Erfurth University. In 1502 there were in Erfurth thirteen regular professors, several large and richly-endowed colleges, ample appliances for scientific study, and an important library. It was esteemed a distinction among the learned men of Germany to have

studied at Erfurth, and it was an ambition of other Universities to have Erfurth men in their chairs.*

After Eisenach and its pine-clad hills, winnowing the breeze into freshness, Erfurth cannot have been cheering to Martin. A place of fat, flat meadows, the bed in primæval times, if one may judge by appearances noted in a short visit, of a vast morass, wandered through by water-courses, which are now more or less represented by the several branches of the Gera river. The town stands in rich alluvial meadow-land, naturally fertile—a butter-bowl of horticultural or agricultural fatness, as Luther called it. Low hills, miles away, rise towards the north. Luther displayed no enthusiasm for Erfurth, as he did for Eisenach. We do not hear of his having had any illness in Eisenach; but his health gave way in Erfurth. If his religion had been, from childhood, too prone to sad imagining, too despondent and heavy-laden, it was not likely to gain brightness from this flat landscape, with its sauntering waters and sombre trailing clouds.

But there was a sound in the air in those first years of the sixteenth century—a sound, a mighty vibration, as of giants rousing themselves and preparing to run a race,—which was very audible in Erfurth. New worlds were being discovered, and in all streets of cities, in all Universities and marts of light, men were becoming impatient of wordy visions, eager for realities, hungry for facts. Pensive and pious as he was, young Luther was keenly alive to this move-

* Jürgens.

ment of his time, and described it afterwards, with rapid, sketchy touches, as he experienced it, not now only, but his whole life long. Everything, he said, was in movement—all hearts full of expectation—all hands busy with varying work. Ransack the chronicles of the world, and you could not match the tidal swell and rush of progress that marked the time. Such ploughing and digging; such planting and building; houses of God and man rising on all hands; minsters and cathedral towers proving how forceful and fertile was still the vitality of mediæval faith. Such dainty and costly eating and drinking, also, the like never before seen on earth—dress glancing in many colours, totally regardless of expense. Who had ever heard of such commerce, embracing the products of all lands?—arts of every name, painting, embroidery, engraving, brought to a pitch of perfection unwitnessed since the birth of Christ. People had become so knowing, too—so inquisitive, penetrating—would pluck the heart from every mystery. Study of languages enthusiastically prosecuted—intellectual wisdom of all kinds passionately desired.

In the crowd of animated and ingenuous striplings that swarmed in the courts and class-rooms of Erfurth University in that first year of the sixteenth century, there can have been none more unconscious of the part to be played by them in its dramatic unfolding than Martin Luther. Every hint, every indication, we have of him tends to depict him as docile, modest, obedient, willing to walk in the old paths and to con the

tasks prescribed him. He did not, in the earlier part of his college career, attract attention of any kind, and he was at no time fired with the strictly academic ambition of attaining to fine technical excellence in scholarship. He could, indeed, read and write Latin with perfect facility. No letters could have more of the tone and air of being written in a man's mother tongue than the Latin letters of Luther. He habitually used the language when, but that he liked it better, there was no reason why he should not have written in German. His Latin letters are every whit as picturesque in imagery, as pithy in expression, as free and flexile in diction, as his German letters.

But the grand study on which he entered at Erfurth—the study which, unlike Latin, was new to him at the University—was Scholastic Philosophy, that is to say, the Aristotelian philosophy, as manipulated by the school divines. Thereby hangs a tale —which, be it said for relief of the reader, will not here be a long one, and ought not to be void of interest. The relation of the Mediæval Church to Aristotle forms one of the most curious subjects of inquiry in the whole range of literary and theological history.

In the days of mortal conflict between classical philosophy and the Christian religion, Aristotle had been proscribed by the Church. The victory of the latter had been complete; but before exultation over a vanquished foe gave place to tolerance and to sympathetic intelligence, the whole intellectual world of classicism went down before the rush of the Northern

tribes. Ere a new system of civilisation established itself in Europe, Greek was thoroughly forgotten, and the very name of Aristotle was known only to those who read about him in Latin authors. Meanwhile, the religion of Mahomet had flamed up portentous in the East, seeming, in its earliest centuries, to be destined to blast and desolate the civilised world. But the first frenzy of militant Islamism passed away. In the East, under Haroun Alraschid and one or two other semi-mythical caliphs, an intellectual and æsthetic civilisation had bloomed out. Aristotle was translated into Arabic; and in this dress, behind the Saracen standard, entering by the gate of Spain, was re-introduced into Europe. From Arabic the great Aristotelian treatises were translated into Latin; and, after this double distillation—say rather double dilution—became known to the theological doctors of the Mediæval Church. "Aristotle," says Gibbon, "was indeed the oracle of the western Universities, but it was a barbarous Aristotle; and, instead of ascending to the fountain head, his Latin votaries humbly accepted a corrupt and remote version from the Jews and Moors of Andalusia."

Gradually Aristotle was brought into the service of the Church. His thinking became the basis of that wonderful compound of philosophy and theology, the scholastic system. Albert the Dominican and Thomas the Franciscan succeeded in applying the forms and terms of Aristotle to the exposition and defence of Church doctrine. Well might the Church honour such

men, and crown them with amaranth as angelic and seraphic doctors. They had made the most elaborate scheme ever worked out by human reason a mere scaffolding for the doctrine of the infallible Church. They had brought the very prince of intellect into vassalage to the faith.

The acme of their achievement had been that masterpiece of ingenious metaphysics, that most lucid and persuasive of all mystifications, the scholastic argument in defence of transubstantiation. One of the grand distinctions of the Aristotelian system is that between substance and accident, the one real and permanent, but wholly unseen, the other unreal and fleeting, but attested by the senses. The substance of bread and wine may, in virtue of this distinction, be changed into the substance of flesh and blood, and yet the accidents of bread and wine, their properties as seen, as touched, as tasted, may remain exactly what they were before. Tens of millions have taken refuge in this ingenious sophistication against the arrows of common sense. Need we wonder that Aristotle was accepted as a champion of orthodoxy, or that his praise was chanted in a hundred Universities?

Him our Martin, eager for truth, but loyal to the traditions of the elders and reverently obedient to the Church, found enthroned in the University of Erfurth. He threw himself with hearty effort upon the treatises of the master, grudging no time and sparing no pains. One of the shining lights of the place was Trutvetter, from Eisenach. Another was

Arnold of Usingen. At the feet of these Gamaliels Martin was indoctrinated into all the subtleties of scholastic logic, strenuously tracking maze after maze of wordy speculation, learning to divide hairs between west and south-west side, and to distinguish between shadows and their shades. When, at the end of two years, he obtained his bachelor's degree, and received permission to teach and lecture in the University, he opened his lips to expound the thrice-excellent wisdom of Aristotle. Luther always affirmed —and it has not even by his adversaries been denied —that he made himself master of what the schoolmen had to teach.

But he began, ere long, to have misgivings. Could he, for one thing, be sure that these Latin treatises, twice diluted, gave the real sense of Aristotle? A keen and penetrating intelligence will have glimpses of a meaning in great authors which has been perverted or obscured; and Luther could not but awaken to the doubt whether these schoolmen really understood the man they had exalted into an idol. We cannot trace the stages of his progress, but in this direction we know him, from his letters, to have moved; and in due course he emerges in fierce revolt against his Thomist and Scotist instructors, asserting that they do not rightly understand a chapter of their own Aristotle. The general tissue and infinite word-reticulation of the scholastic philosophy became at the same time, though, apparently, by slow degrees, unsatisfactory to him. The "distinctiunculæ," as his flexile Latin enabled him to call

them—the distinctions drawn out into threads too fine to spin—of the schoolmen did not seem to him cordage with which he could rig out his soul for its life-voyage.

It was in the autumn of 1502 that he obtained his bachelor's degree; in the beginning of 1505 he became master of arts. These are important dates in the life of Luther. He was now in those years when the mind ripens fast, the faculties attaining strength and independence, the will becoming firm, "the mighty hopes that make us men" beginning to loom in the distance, the resolves on which depend the ultimate shaping of career and character beginning to press for answer. Slight as is our stock of particular facts relating to him between the dates named, we can with certitude realise that he moved in various circles, and presented varying aspects to different men: revealed himself partly to this friend, partly to that, and, all the time, kept something to himself which he hardly told to any.

He was known, not quite as one of themselves—by no means as of the inner brotherhood—but as a man of mark and intellectual aspiration, to the circle of young Humanists who then, in the first glad flush of the Renaissance, as it broke from below the Alps and shot its morning gleamsons towards the North, talked, rhymed, laughed at priests and monks, praised Reuchlin, adored Erasmus, polished Latin prose to a Ciceronian lustre, aspired to write verses of which Horace and Virgil would not have been ashamed, and on the whole cultivated and affected a classic elegance, freedom, and pride of existence in the precincts of Erfurth University.

German authors give us lists of these youths and their performances, and of the classic names in which, with a view, shall we say, to propitiating Muses who might have been frightened by the gutturals of Germany, they veiled their Teutonic names. One John Jaeger, classicised into Rubianus, took part subsequently in the world-famous *Letters of Obscure Men*, in which monks and their Latin and the priesthood were satirised. Another was Eoban Hesse, whose felicity in Latin verse-making won him a distinction not yet forgotten in Germany.

Luther was in society with these men, but not on terms of perfect friendship. He passed rather for a pleasant fellow, who combined the gravity of a philosophic scholar with the choice accomplishments of taking part in a glee and playing on the flute. But there never was a day in his life, unless it might have been for a short time under the kindly-pedantic influence of Trebonius, when Martin Luther could have concentrated his soul upon the problem of polishing Latin prose or perfecting the tinkle-tinkle of a Latin verse. Nor had he any sympathy with the spirit in which those intellectual and æsthetic dapperlings satirised the clergy. The Galahad instinct in him was offended by their Mephistophelean scorn. He met the Humanists without sullenness, nay, with partial sympathy, but he felt that with them was not his rest.

Friends of his of a very different kind now become known to us. John Lange of Erfurth and George Burckhard, better known as Spalatin, seem to have

discovered about this time that Martin Luther was a man of men. To these he was drawn by the sympathy, if not yet of particular views on religious matters, yet of profound religious earnestness of disposition. With these he stood on the same footing as with Braun and Conrad of Eisenach. They were brothers, and much more than brothers, for to an affection as warm and true as that of family relationship they added the nobler and more precious relationship of spiritual affinity. The friendship of Luther would probably have been pronounced by Spalatin the most valuable acquisition of his life. He surrendered to Luther his whole heart, as well as the undisputed sovereignty of his brain, as Jonathan did to David. He was by no means a feeble or foolish man—there is ability, though of rather a sleepy kind, in his "Life of Frederick the Wise"; but it appears never to have occurred to him that Luther was anything but his born king, to whom it was his clear duty to defer in all things. At an early age Spalatin became chaplain to Frederick, and acquired his complete confidence, thus enabling Luther to bring his influence to bear directly upon the Elector's mind, a circumstance that turned out to be of cardinal importance in the history of the world.

If we have been right hitherto in tracing the thread of his spiritual development, we cannot be wrong in believing that, amid all the activity, all the social intercourse and external occupation, of his life in Erfurth, he continued to feel deeply on religious matters. There is no ground, however, for believing that he

was as yet attracted by the evangelical preachers who were preparing the way for him. At Magdeburg, at Eisenach, and now in Erfurth, he might have heard such preachers,— Proles in Magdeburg, Hilten in Eisenach, Weinmann in Erfurth. But the likelihood is that he shrank from giving them a fair and sufficient hearing, vaguely taking it for granted that the Church, as represented by the great body of the clergy and the monks, must be in the right, and that these men were disloyal and semi-heretical.

On one occasion Martin set out from Erfurth with a companion, probably on a journey to Mansfeld, possibly for a mere walk. In the fashion of students of the period, he wore a sword at his side. When they had gone some distance from the town, the sword slipped from the scabbard, and cut open a large vein in his leg. With great difficulty and pain he contrived to stay the bleeding, while his friend went to fetch surgical aid from the town. At the moment when he believed his life to be in imminent peril, he cried for help upon Mary. In the following night the wound opened, and again his cry was to the mother of Christ. "Had I then died," he said, long afterwards, "I should have placed my trust for salvation in Mary." We have less definite information on the subject of an illness which also brought into view the unrest of his mind. This time he derived consolation from the words of an old priest, who bade him be of good cheer, for God would yet find him work to do. He was brightened for the moment, but his spirit remained in gloom.

It is an interesting fact, though of less importance than some good Protestants have thought it, that he one day, rummaging the University library, came upon a Bible. He had never seen the book in its entirety. Turning over the leaves, he was surprised to find that it contained so much besides the lessons read in the Church services. His eye fell upon the story of Hannah and Samuel. It was new to him. He read it with intense delight. A desire sprang up to possess a whole Bible for himself. But he does not seem to have made repeated pilgrimages to this Bible, and the incident had no special effect upon his spiritual condition.

In the early spring of 1505 he obtained his degree of master of arts, standing second among seventeen candidates. Already, as Melanchthon tells us, his reputation was high in the University, his powers having attracted general notice. The ceremonial attending the bestowal of the degree made a life-long impression upon his mind. Many years after, he recurred to the occasion, speaking of the honours paid to the new masters and the torches borne before them in procession. "I hold," he said, "that there is no joy pertaining to this world, and on this side the grave, that can compare with it."

CHAPTER VII.

THE LIGHTNING FLASH.

There would be partakers, doubt it not, of Martin's joy in his mastership of arts in the household under Mansfeld Crag. The honest counts, the sturdy burghers of the little mining town, would give John Luther joy of his clever lad, and John, without more gush than was becoming, would own that he seemed to be turning out well.

His father's heart would now be full of the legal scheme. He had worked hard to keep his son at the University, but he did not grudge his pains. Already he beheld Martin in vision leading a bride of birth and wealth to the altar. The lad should not lack books, expensive though the legal tomes might be. A costly *Corpus Juris* was provided for him, to begin with. Proud of his first-born, and sensible of the nobility of culture, John Luther already addressed him with studied consideration, as if the familiarity of the fireside were no longer quite in place, and Martin should feel that he was a gentleman.*

"Rather too much of worldliness in our honest

* Those acquainted with German customs will understand the change when it is said that he now addressed Martin not as *Du*, but as *Ihr*.

John!" readers may be not unlikely to exclaim. There is something in the charge. John Luther did not take ideal views of life. But let us be just. He was a man of devout, God-fearing habits. But he could not help seeing that, in the routine duties of priests and monks, in reading or singing masses, in repeating prayers, even in preaching the kind of sermons one was then accustomed to listen to, keenness and capacity of brain were not wanted. John knew that this son of his owned a head of the working kind—a brain fit to transact those parts of the world's business that could not be done in a waking dream.

But Martin, though he might keep his counsel, and shrank as yet from opposition to his father, could not throw his heart into the legal project. John, as we know, had never held the key to his son's character. Dr. Newman tells us that from an early period of life he was vividly sensible of "two only supreme and luminously self-evident beings," himself and his Creator. He "thought life might be a dream," that "all this world" might be "a deception." He might himself be an angel, and the air might be full of angels who were playfully deceiving him with "the semblance of a material world." For the boy Luther the unseen world was no subject of fantastic imagining. The sternest sense of reality dominated his mind. The fantastic, the fanciful, the modern-poetical, as distinguished from the antique Hebrew-poetical, aspects of religion, which play so eminent a part in the spiritual history of Dr. Newman, had for him curiously little interest. But,

from the first, the idea of God filled his mind as it filled the mind of the boy Newman. God was clothed for him in attributes of unspeakable terror; even Christ could not be directly approached. From those years when his heart was almost crushed by the severity of his parents and schoolmasters, the notion had haunted him that his supreme duty was to devote himself to the task of propitiating Heaven by the methods prescribed by the Church. The Church system was typified, embodied, perfected in the monastic life. The convent was a mystic temple—a shrine of sacred and silent devotion —glowing in the world's dark wilderness—refuge alike from an angry God and from a hard, unsympathising father.

His recent scholastic studies were well fitted to intensify his yearnings towards monasticism. Jürgens remarks that the schoolmen dwell much on the pains of hell, are endlessly inventive in illustrating their intensity and lending vividness to the idea of their eternal duration. In what Luther has at any time told us of his spiritual experiences, there is, indeed, no direct reference to the fear of hell. But the fact of hell, in all that ghastly and appalling pageantry in which it is arrayed in Dante's poem, was universally accepted in Europe at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. A pious-hearted youth believed in the reality of the infinite anguish just as firmly as he believed in the reality of death. He might not dwell specially upon it—he might not be conscious of the wish to escape punishment

as one of the chief motives urging him to forsake the world—but it would have an effect upon all his thinking and all his feeling, imparting sombreness and solemnity to the ground-tone of his mind. Nor is it incompatible with an unquestioning belief in hell torments that one should have yearnings after spiritual perfection, aspirations after a pure and lofty ideal, and be impelled by these, more consciously than either by the dread of pain or the hope of happiness, to complete surrender of the soul to the religious life.

There was no comfort, therefore, for Martin in his father's scheme. Of worldly ambition he never evinced a trace. For wealth, and all that wealth could buy, he always displayed the princeliest indifference. In his estimation, as in that of his University friends, theology was queen of the sciences, the one science, the one pursuit, supremely worthy of a man. "A jurist," he said, long afterwards, "has to deal only with the affairs of this temporal world, but a theologian has to deal with things spiritual and eternal, which have been committed to him by God. His heaven, and all His gifts and treasures, forgiveness of sins, righteousness—these have been committed to the theologian." If he spoke thus in the sobriety of experienced manhood, how much more would he be affected by the grandeur of theological study as contemplated from the portals of the University! To help men to adjust their pitiful quarrels—to wrangle about petty interests—to make the worse, for lucre's sake, appear the better reason, and entangle justice in the net of law—how miserable was this in comparison!

In the first half of 1505 he visited his parents at Mansfeld. Intercourse with his father would doubtless involve more or less veiling and concealment of his state of mind, a fact which would not promote his peace. The fire, forbidden to show itself on the surface, would burn all the more fiercely within. He would mark his father's pride in him, and we may be sure, from many affectionate expressions in which he has referred to John Luther's bitter toil for his children, that the paternal generosity in the matter of his law studies and books touched him to the heart. At moments, perhaps —when the circle in the Mansfeld household was radiant with the faces of genial neighbours, and Martin, with his flute and fine college talk, was the life of the party, and father and mother, brothers and sisters, bowed towards him like the sheaves towards Joseph in his dream—he may have all but told his soul that he would throw himself into the arms of his father, choose this world—so sweet a world, if not quite heaven!—as his portion, and bid the Galahad visions an eternal farewell. But in the silent, meditative, midnight hour—the sweat standing in beaded drops upon his brow—he always felt that this would be to listen to the glozing of the serpent. And to reinforce the deeper instincts of his spiritual nature—to accentuate the clear word of God, "thou shalt surely die"—there comes, about this time, the death, by tragic violence, of a friend! Of the fact there is no doubt, of the exact circumstances of the death we are uninformed. The word used by Matthesius is "stabbed, *erstochen.*" We have it from Luther's own mouth,

that he was, on an occasion which he does not date, profoundly impressed by the death of a student who, in hunting, had been run down by, or fallen under, a wild boar, and had been killed, not by the boar, but by the spear-thrust of his own brother, who was trying to kill the animal. The term applied by Matthesius to the death that agitated him at the time of his visit to Mansfeld in 1505 is well suited to describe the death which, he tells us, occurred, apparently in his presence, in the hunting-field. What is quite certain is that the thought of death, in its irresistibility, awfulness, and suddenness, was darkening his mind when he left Mansfeld in 1505 to walk back to Erfurth.

On some day in the early part of July he drew near to his journey's end. At that season the heat in central Germany is always great, and the sultry air was now additionally oppressive by being heavily charged with electricity. The sky was black with thunder-clouds, and if Martin, as he looked towards the city from the low heights to northward, could discern spires and convents, they must have glimmered as in a lurid twilight. Tired he doubtless was from his long journey. He had descended from the low hills into the dreary plain and reached the desolate hamlet of Stotternheim. The place is forlorn even in clear weather, and with a railway shrieking past it; under brooding thunder-clouds, on that July day of the sixteenth century, the gloom must have been funereal. In an instant a flash of blinding splendour seemed to kindle the world, and a deafening thunderclap shook

the ground. It was as if death had leaped upon Martin. He sank down, and so soon as he regained a clear consciousness of life, and gathered his faculties enough for speech, he cried out, "Help, sweet Saint Anne; save me, save me, and I will become a monk!"

The storm rolled away. He rose up; walked, now with a determined step, showing no fatigue, into Erfurth, and proceeded to carry out his vow. He betrayed no impatience—was in no headlong haste—though his resolution did not waver, and he did not stay to consult his father and mother. He asked a few of his most intimate friends to spend an evening with him; entertained them with his best talk, his best music; bade adieu to them, without hinting that anything unusual was to happen. Whether, in the deep sparkling eyes of him, there was unwonted moisture at the leave-taking, we can only conjecture. The friends suspected nothing. Next morning they learned that he had entered the Augustinian convent. Those of them who hurried thither to make inquiries he declined to see. Not until a month had passed did he admit audience from the outer world. *Alea jacta est.*

Has he done right? Yes, a thousand times, yes! What he felt in the inmost recesses of his soul to be for him the highest law has been openly given effect to. The secret is out—the mystery solved. Having long flowed underground, the stream rises to the surface. More or less vividly he had always been conscious of its flowing, always heard the far-off murmur of its waves. He now proves true to himself. It is the indispensable

preliminary to all spiritual victory in the future; his soul had been divided between two; he had lived in an element of halfness; he now penetrated to what for him was the good, the true, the whole. The sanctity that is apart from the world and its concerns, the heaven on earth of ascetic purity and saintly devotion, the help of the kind angels and holy martyrs, and of the gracious Virgin—these he had hoped for since childhood. From tempting gleam of fortune and renown, from pride of spirit and meanness of sensuality, from the world, the flesh, the devil, he turns decisively to his Mother Church. The question of the abstract merit or demerit, wisdom or unwisdom, of his entering the convent, has no essential bearing on that of the rightness or the wrongness of his present decision. He acted in faith. He had not a shadow of doubt that he obeyed conscience and God. What he did, therefore, was what he ought to have done.

Bravely, with quiet determination, he leaves behind him his beloved books. Two volumes only he takes with him into the convent, and his choice of one of these may surprise us. He cannot leave his Plautus behind. Some radiancy of mirth he will not, even as a monk, forego. The circumstance was characteristic. In his most solemn moments he never lost his genial humour, never lost the power to laugh. The other author he could not part with was Virgil. This we can well understand. The gentle wisdom, the melodious piety, of the Mantuan brought no discordant note into the orisons of the most devout of monks. When his cell

closed upon Martin, with these two volumes alone to remind him of the world he had lost, did he lay his head upon his knees, and melt into one long, low fit of weeping? Perhaps. But when he sank into sleep, his rest was more profound than it had been since the trouble of his life began.

Great was the surprise, great also the regret and annoyance, felt in Erfurth University on account of this step of Martin's. It was as if a distinguished wrangler at Cambridge, or double-first at Oxford, had suddenly joined the Salvation Army.

And John Luther? He was simply furious. After all his pains and hopes—after Mansfeld, Magdeburg, Eisenach, Erfurth, to see his son a monk! He who was to be an honour to the family—whom his father could hardly address except as Learned Sir—had become a beggar. John falls back into the language of most familiar domesticity, merely substituting contempt for tenderness. "You booby, you moon-struck, maundering simpleton!" But the particulars of John's explosion are not extant, and we need not try to imagine them. His wrath was not unbuttressed by reason. To his keen and shrewd intellect, Martin's notion of climbing into heaven by the convent stairs seemed infinitely weak. He entertained, moreover, the firmest conviction that a father had a Divine right to honour, and that his son, in leaping to a decision against his well-known will, and without deigning to consult him, had committed a sin. With full deliberation John Luther withdrew from Martin his favour and countenance, placing him

under the paternal ban. Martin's affection concurred with his piety in making this, for him, a very serious concern. His father's stubborn opposition sank into his heart, and furnished food for deep meditation. He was too sound in all parts of his moral nature to plume himself on fantastic notions of being a martyr. But he stood steadfastly to the belief that in entering the convent he obeyed God rather than man.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NOVICE.

In entering the convent Martin gave himself unreservedly to the Church. Intensely religious by nature, he had from his infancy yearned towards God; and God's visible dwelling-place was the Church. The whole frame of social life was set in her system. She seemed large as the vaulted sky, enveloping all things. *Her* cathedrals, like the mountains, steadied the world. *Hers* were the saints, the martyrs, the hierarchies, whose hallowed crowd fringed, to his imagination, the clouds of dawn and sunset with celestial gold. One sublime human presence sat high above kings and princes, invested almost beyond human capability with Divine power, the Holy Father, the Papa or Pope, of Christendom. Through Pope and Church came down to man the voice of God; through Church and Pope went up to God the voice of man. In services which had been evolved in the course of fifteen hundred years as the best expression, the most exalting vehicle, of man's worshipping faculties—in prayers and solemn chants, with swell of organ-music—in the life of a thousand monasteries, where flesh was mortified and fine spirits fed on angels' food—the Church made her appeal to fervent souls; and

the response accorded her by a vast proportion of the most reverent and most religiously susceptible among them was still the response made by young Martin Luther. "Surely this is the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

The great Augustinian Brotherhood, to which Luther had now annexed himself, was brought into form in old centuries by Popes Innocent IV. and Alexander IV. These pontiffs drew together various bodies of anchorets that had been leading a vagrant existence, and placed them under the rules imputed to Saint Augustine. To Alexander IV. they owed their cowls, and their privilege of exemption from the jurisdiction of bishops. They were not bound to choose episcopal abbots, but were governed by superintendents, priors, vicars, and provincials.

The Order took root and flourished. Two thousand monasteries, three hundred nunneries, upwards of thirty thousand votaries of both sexes, followed the rule of Saint Augustine. The majestic authority of the saint promoted the honour and dignity of the brotherhood, and the Popes continued to be its staunch friends. An Augustinian monk was always at the head of the Papal Sacristy. Nor had the Augustinians, on the whole, been unworthy of their saintly and pontifical patrons. Strenuous in monkish observances, they had been less arrogantly assuming, less quarrelsome and fanatical, than their rivals, the Dominicans and Franciscans. The former were pushing, importunate, aggressive. Sons of thunder, they were always ready to do battle for their Church.

Nor did they eschew ambition, or shrink sensitively from touch of this world's wealth. Fat benefices, well-endowed University professorships, gave no offence to their sensibilities. Zealous in controversy, they were prompt also to lay hold on carnal weapons, to apply fire and sword to the extirpation of heresy, to figure as inquisitors. The Franciscans, on the other hand—the brothers and sisters of the tender-spirited Saint Francis—represented pietistic monasticism in its extreme form. Their poverty was strongly accentuated. They went barefoot, and in common German parlance were called the Barefooters. Theirs was the Christianity of children, theirs the piety of women, gentle as Angelico's angels, yet not too good for human nature's self-will and spite, and aversion to the irksomeness of searching investigation into facts. The dove-like simplicity of the Franciscans might sometimes border on insipidity and mental enervation.

Luther was not without pride in his Order as such, drawing at all times a line of distinction between the Augustinians and other monks. Not so proud, harsh, peremptory as the Dominicans, not so sheepishly innocent as the Franciscans, the Augustinians were, to his thinking, the best of monks. He was less likely to do injustice to the ambition, the self-trumpeting dogmatism and inquisitorial hardness of those who wore the badge of St. Dominic than to the feminine piety of those who drew inspiration from St. Francis. His sympathies were on the side of strength and of intellectual clearness. Allowing for his bias in favour of his own Order, we

may admit that his choice of the Augustinian convent was a wise one.

Immediately on application, he was received into the shelter of the convent; but, before final assumption of the vows, it was necessary for him to undergo a year's probation. The entrance on probation was, however, in itself, a solemnity, and though we have no specific information as to how Luther conducted himself on the occasion, we can realise the main features of the scene.

In presence of the men with whom he was about to enter into a sacred *camaraderie*, Martin was asked by the Prior whether, in very deed, with perfect appreciation of all that the step involved, and consciousness of adequate power to undertake the vows, he was prepared to enter on his novitiate. The obedience, the self-denial, the hard fare, the rough garb, the vigil by night, the weariness by day, the poverty, the mortification of the flesh, the prostrating fasts, the public begging, the absorption in religious exercises, were set before him as the conditions of life for a monk. Did none of these things move him? Could he, with these things full in view, still resolve to turn his back upon the world, and set his face heavenward? Martin answered, Yea. If so, said the Prior, he would be taken upon probation for a year.

God was now invoked to finish in him the good work begun. The whole convent said Amen. The great hymn to their patron saint, *Magne Pater Augustine*, was then uplifted. Meanwhile, the appointed officials shaved Martin's head; his clothes were taken off, and his

garment as a novice was put on. White woollen shirt, black frock and cowl, black leathern girdle ; scapulary of white cloth, suspended across the shoulders, descending before and behind. While the robing proceeded, the Prior admonished the novice to put off the old man and to put on the new. The investiture complete, he knelt before the Prior, and made further responses. The Prior then offered up prayer. At its end all rose, and formed procession. Solemn music, company answering company in alternate swell, filled the air with deep vibrations ; they moved onward to the high choir, and again knelt in prayer. Then, at last, the novice was led into the hall of the convent, and received the kiss of fellowship from the Prior and the Brethren.

Martin, as we should have expected, threw himself with his whole soul into the life of the convent. Unimpeded by secular studies, undisturbed by worldly acquaintances, he was the most ardent of novices, austerely self-exacting, perhaps almost ostentatiously profuse in prayer and humiliation The Brethren would naturally take pride in having attracted to the Order a young man of shining parts and University distinction ; but not less naturally might they look askance upon his flaming zeal, and find in it a kind of rebuke which the saintliest of saints do not always take with meekness. The elderly men, in particular, who had probably learned that the enthusiasm of novices was of effervescent quality, and whose own enthusiasm might betray the least little shrivelling influence of age's frost, would look on with marked absence of excitement. They had seen the like

of all this before! A high-flying bird, that would perch on the heavenly constellations presently! One thing at least was clear to the Brethren, old and young, that if this fervid acolyte wanted mortification of the flesh, it would be unreasonable to deny him. The bitter as well as the sweet in the cup of convent existence—let him taste it by all means! Mortifications that were salutary for him came in quite handy for them. So our young friend becomes man of all work to the convent—makes the beds, sweeps the rooms, gets down on all fours to wash them, and performs other and still meaner duties, scavenger and other, for the good of the establishment. A thousand pities, surely, if mortifications so beneficial from a celestial point of view for him, and terrestrially so useful for us, should not have free scope! He asks for a Bible—they have no objection to his reading it. He prays and fasts—they blame him not. But business must not be neglected. Scripture reading, long prayers, soaring notions and sublime ways, are excellent things; but not by these will the necessities of a convent be supplied. Bread we want; meat and cheese and the colour of coin. Out with you, Master Martin, sack on shoulder, and beg. Those fine eyes of yours—that serious face, so earnest, so pure—will bring grist to the mill, and fetch butter and new-laid eggs from frugal housewives. Therefore, most exemplary of novices, forth into the highways and beg. So said the judicious elderly monks.

We gather from Matthesius that the too utilitarian conduct of these Brethren towards their novice at-

tracted some notice in Erfurth, causing, in fact, a kind of sensation. In the University, in particular, where his being snatched from the flowery path of letters was thought of with resentment, and where he certainly had many friends, the authorities of the convent were blamed. An attempt was actually made from that quarter to procure an alleviation of the severities of his novitiate, an attempt, if we may trust Matthesius, not without effect. But we have no statement from Luther, at the time or subsequently, that his treatment was unfair, or that he desired any relaxation of the discipline. Erasmus, in like case, lost heart, and gave up the struggle. He had no sympathy, no spiritual affinity, with the men who founded the religious Orders. Luther's idiosyncrasy made him soul's brother of the Bernards and the Theresas. In his own person he renewed the elevation, the enthusiasm, the sustained intensity of spiritual passion, that had glowed in many a heart in desert caverns and in mountain cells. He modestly averred that he had been a pious monk, but never did he say that the Augustinians of Erfurth had been too hard on him.

Under such aspects and prospects the year of novitiate glided away, and Martin, nothing daunted by his experiences, took upon him at its close the full vows of the Order. So far as firmness of purpose and deliberate emphasis and solemnity of promise could avail, he bound himself to live and die a monk of St. Augustine, relinquishing earthly pleasures, consenting never to know the ecstasy of woman's love, abjuring

secular employment, and dedicating his time and energies to the building up of a tower of saintly merit whose top should reach to heaven.

On the whole, we may pronounce him happy, or, at lowest, more happy than he would have been if he had not crossed the convent threshold. But there was one drawback to his satisfaction. The peremptory and indignant disapproval of his father rankled in his memory. He might feel that his father's religion was hard and prosaic, but he knew him to be a man of judgment, uprightness, and conscience. It may be considered certain that Martin entertained no misgivings as to the rightness of what he had done; but it is equally certain that he was much struck by the position which his father took up, and in particular by his express refusal to admit that Martin had wisely and justly concluded his conduct to be shaped in accordance with the law of God.

CHAPTER IX.

CONVENT INCIDENTS.

The year of his novitiate is behind him; and we may suppose that, whether by interposition of the University or otherwise, he has been relieved of the most abjectly menial offices of the convent. Figure him, in his minute cell, with its table, its one chair, its one small window, punctually performing the ritual service of each successive hour. The Bible which had been given him in his year of probation is taken from him, Arnold of Usingen, who is a member of the convent as well as a University professor and famed adept in the scholastic philosophy, consoling him with the assurance that it really will not repay his study, that it is every heretic's book, and that the writings of the scholastic doctors are what one can read with true profit. He has a deep respect for Usingen and submits; but he soon discovers for himself in the convent another Bible, bound in red leather, and is never happier than when, gliding into a quiet corner, he can hang over it. He reads without misgiving, suspecting no discordance between Bible and Church. The Catholic system, with its scheme of mediatorial saints, has as yet no

flaw in his eyes. He provides himself with a celestial body-guard, in form of twenty-one special patrons, selected from the most eminent saints. St. George, the dragon-slayer, St. Thomas, the doubter, and St. Anne, whom he had invoked in the paroxysm of his soul's anguish, were of the number. With one-and-twenty picked saints to mount guard over him, with the Church and the great scholastic divines to guarantee his salvation, he could let the mad world wag as it pleased.

In all possible forms of association you can count upon the existence of class-feeling, *esprit de corps*. The Augustinian Brothers magnified their office, and loved to expatiate on the shining qualities of monks and the superlative excellence of Augustinians. We have a friendly feeling for other Orders, entertaining them, and being entertained by them, in simple Christian hospitality; but we cannot help being aware that those Barefooters, with their childish fancies and stupid objection to learning, and those Dominican preachers, with their noisy rhapsodising and haranguing, are not of quite so high a strain as the thoughtful and dignified Brothers of St. Augustine. The vow of silence, common to all monkish orders, is one which human nature never did and never will observe. Even the lonely anchoret must have muttered to the rocks and torrents, or to himself, or peopled his cell with angel visitants, and favoured them with remarks. The monks of St. Edmundsbury, even under the faultless governance of Abbot Samson, as depicted by the graphic pen of

Carlyle, himself an example of the compatibility of abstract worship of silence with concrete incapacity to be still for five minutes, were always chattering. There is no sign that Martin and his brothers of the cloister were tongue-tied. Sometimes the talk became more piquantly pleasant from being carried on in the sweet seclusion of *solitude à deux*. Luther retained to the end of his life a vivid recollection of one talk of this kind with a friendly preceptor. The latter had somewhere copied out with his own hand the record of a disputation, in presence of Judge Probus, between the appalling heretic Arius and the mighty champion Athanasius. This he showed to Luther, who read it with eager interest, and the two talked it over. The incident is a very small one, but so bright was the ripple it made in the monotonous flow of Martin's life that the melodious cadence of it, like the remembered note of a brook in June, never died out of his memory. The kind preceptor, Luther afterwards said, was a man of true devoutness, one of many who, through the ecclesiastical fog, had discerned the eternal lights.

On another occasion, foraging for the convent, he roamed as far as Arnstadt, a small place about eight miles from Erfurth. Finding himself in want of food, he turned into the Franciscan convent, and took his seat among the Barefooters at their mid-day meal. At the head of the board sat one Doctor Henry Kühne, an intensely enthusiastic Franciscan, who discoursed to the company on the preternatural blessedness of the monastic life—how miraculous was its virtue, how

high it raised the brethren above common mortals, how it renewed the unsullied innocence of the baptismal hour, and made the neophyte a sinless Christian child, new-born into the kingdom of heaven.

Sweet to all healthy and unhealthy souls is the incense of praise. The honest monks sat open-mouthed, their noses in the air,* tingling with happiness from the crowns of their tonsured heads to the toes of their naked feet. Never did parched goslings drink in more greedily a summer shower than the Barefooters and their guests accepted the words of the orator. Martin felt that it was a grand thing to be a monk. What mattered it that the cross might be at moments heavy to bear? The reward was glorious. In hours of exaltation, serenely poised above the world, a simple-hearted young brother felt as if seated on the lap of God.†

For subjects of talk we were not much at a loss, though perhaps, when one had been some time in the convent, there might arise a feeling of sameness. Metaphysics were an unfailing resource. We had every one of us had our brains, more or less, metaphysically whetted and furbished up by the scholastic discipline. A metaphysician possesses the immense advantage of carrying his philosophical apparatus about with him. Of God, of freedom, of immortality, the grand themes of metaphysics, man can converse with man wherever the human consciousness comes into play, wherever word

* *Maul und Nasen auf.*—LUTHER.
† *Wir sassen Got auf Schooss.*—*Ibid.*

of mouth or glance of eye can convey ideas from soul to soul. The cloistered friends did not, like Mr. Matthew Arnold, complain of "debility" in the speculative faculties. They "read and disputed daily on the being of God." What they said is not recorded, but we shall not be far wrong if we conclude that they said as much as had been said by all preceding sages, or, as Zadig puts it, *très peu de chose.*

From metaphysics the transition was not violent to dreams and heavenly visitings, to monitions and silent revealings of a spiritual if not supernatural kind. The most zealous were careful to note these things, and to keep a record of their nightly experiences. Questions of casuistry, more or less practical, would come up. As saintly persons we, of course, have the lay world under our feet, but there may be difficulty sometimes as to where and how to draw the line between sacred and secular, between innocent and sinful. We often bandy words on the earthliness of marriage. Luther said afterwards that, in his monkish time, he looked upon the married state as a state of condemnation. Nevertheless, we intelligent Augustinians do not go to such lengths as those hysterical Barefoot fellows. These, unless we Augustinians draw the bow a little too strong in describing them, have a perfect horror of all women except nuns. If an honourable matron or respected girl passes through their churchyard, they straightway go to work, with besom and even with fire, to purge from taint the consecrated place. This is too much for thoughtful and

moderate Augustinians like us; but we, too, lay immense stress on the blessedness of virginity, and look askance at marriage. Need it be wondered that, in monastic circles, the Hebrew patriarchs were, on account of their lax proceedings in the item of matrimony, lightly spoken of? The virtues illustrated in legends of the saints were, on the other hand, extolled. In brief, the brothers found enough to talk about, and although the express business of their lives was to muse and pray, to minister to the sick and to nurse in their own souls the plant of heavenly perfection, the convent was by no means an abode of death-like silence.

Once, in the library, poking and prying as when he came across the Bible, Martin laid his hand upon a volume of sermons by Huss. The presence of such a book in such a place is a noticeable item. Protestantism not so called—Protestantism gagged, hidden, stifled, burnt—Protestantism, unextinguished and inextinguishable, found its way, in those times of decadent Mediævalism, into pulpits and libraries, stole into the cell of the monk, lurked under cowl and scapulary. Martin's eye fell upon the volume, and he could not restrain his curiosity to see what the heretic might have to say for himself. Almost holding his breath, like a bold schoolboy, bold yet not without nervous trepidation, who scrutinises a dangerous-looking snake or adder detected in the clover field, he looks within, he dares to read. His breath comes more freely. There is nothing awful in what he takes in. His impression is like that which Dr. Newman

tells us he experienced in his boyhood when reading verses by Voltaire: "How dreadful, but how plausible." Strange to say, this perverse heretic—this martyr on the devil's side—this Bohemian pest—actually quotes Scripture, quotes it in what seems to Martin a pertinent and Christian manner. Soon, however, he starts. He must not dally with the evil thing. He shakes himself free of the volume as Paul shook off the venomous beast into the fire. Huss was a heretic damned, and, if he, Martin, listened to him, the convent walls would blacken, the sun would refuse to shine. Even to think of such a monster of iniquity he felt to be a sin. In defence of the Pope, in zeal for the Church and for God, he would himself have kindled the fire to consume Huss. Closing the book he hastened away, "wounded to the heart" at the thought of the company he had strayed into. "Had any one," wrote Luther, in changed days, with reference to his first monkish period, "then taught what I now, through God's grace, believe and teach, I would have torn him with my teeth."

The honour of the Augustinian Brotherhood was staked upon the righteousness of Huss's execution. An Augustinian luminary, named Zecharias, had won splendid praise for his zeal and skill in conducting the argument against the heretic. The golden rose, bestowed upon men whom the Pope singles out as having deserved pre-eminently well of himself and the Church, had been conferred upon this Augustinian champion. He lay buried in the church or chapel of Luther's convent, and on the grave-stone was his effigy.

The rose, carved on the garment of the order, announced that the glory which had crowned his life had been for him in death the pledge of a joyful immortality. Martin, as he looked upon the stony face, might fancy that the lips moved to say, "Go thou and do likewise."

Such was life in the Erfurth convent during the first two of those years when Martin Luther occupied one of its cells. It is not possible to fix with confident accuracy the date of each little incident. Luther himself, in subsequently referring to them, may have put them in the wrong year, and one must not be held to affirm that everything mentioned in the two preceding chapters took place in the order in which it appears.

CHAPTER X.

A PRIEST COMPLETE.

Our first indisputably authentic letter of Luther's, dated April 22nd, 1507, has reference to his investiture with priest's orders. It has already been mentioned in connection with his Eisenach friendships. It is a commonplace performance. No touch or tone in it has any differentiating quality that marks it out for Luther's. He mentions incidentally that he had recently visited Braun—a trip to Eisenach of which we have otherwise no record—and thanks his friend for "many good words and good deeds." Braun seems to have been his senior by at least a few years. "Dearest father, master, brother," Martin calls him, "the first in years and in kindly solicitude, the second in merit, the third in religion." He tells Braun to come direct to the convent, on arriving at Erfurth, and not to wander into cross-roads on the outlook for quarters. "You will have to be a *cell*arer," he adds, feebly attempting a pun, "that is to say, the inhabitant of a *cell*."

One interesting thing there is in the letter, namely, what it says about Luther's father. The day of the ordination had been appointed with the express view of consulting John Luther's convenience. For a time the stern

miner had absolutely refused to countenance his son. But he had been smitten with sore affliction. The plague had crossed the Mansfeld threshold, and two of his sons had been struck down. His friends and his son's friends, thinking that in his grief they had found means to move him, entreated him to restore Martin to the old place in his affections. He remained silent, inexorable. Thereupon, whether from device or accident, a report reached Mansfeld that Martin also was dead. John Luther tasted the poignant anguish not only of having lost two sons, but of being conscious of letting a third, his eldest and best, sink into the grave without a relenting word. The pleading of death melted the adamantine heart. John's views on priests and monks underwent no revision, but his anger departed. He raised no objection to Martin's assumption of priest's orders; nay, he must have taken a reasonable amount of interest in the celebration, for he made it widely known among his acquaintance, and came to attend it, not alone, but at the head of a cavalcade of twenty horsemen. It was customary for friends to bestow presents on newly ordained priests, and John Luther further attested the completeness of his good will by giving Martin twenty gulden, say, ten pounds.

On the 2nd of May, 1507, Martin Luther was ordained a priest. John von Lasphe, Bishop of Brandenburgh, officiated. At one point in the ceremony, the imagination or the conscience of Martin was so deeply impressed that he became conscious of physical prostration almost to the point of swooning. He made

some attempt to cower out of sight and retire, but an earnest word from a brother restored him to composure, and he was able to persevere. It is to be noted, however, that perfect clearness as to his state of mind, at this juncture and for some little time afterwards, cannot be attained. In the latter period of his life, his mind was so thoroughly inflamed with rage against monkish institutions, that the records of his memory ceased to be, in details, trustworthy upon the subject. The tone of his letter to Braun is exactly what we should expect from one who looked upon the assumption of priestly powers with solemn, but not more than conventionally solemn, feelings. That his temperament was one of genius, subject to the momentary flashes and eccentric impulses of genius, is beyond question; and it is highly probable that there was a trace of epilepsy in his constitution. It is therefore consistent with credibility that his general sentiment in relation to priest's orders might be complacent calmness, and that yet, at some critically impressive moment in the ceremony, he should have been so struck with awe and amazement at the idea of offering up Christ in propitiation to God, as almost to sink down upon the ground.

The ritual solemnities were followed by a festivity of a more terrestrially social nature. John Luther and his friends sat down, with the inmates of the convent and the newly consecrated priest, to a meal which we need not believe to have been too monastically frugal. Encouraged, no doubt, by the thought that his father

had not merely acquiesced in his taking orders, but had come attended by riders, had made him a handsome present, and now sat with him at the festal board, Martin plucked up courage to ask him whether he would not withdraw the disapproval which he had expressed respecting the monkish vow. Some of the Brothers seconded Martin, and we are at liberty to imagine that there may have been in their manner towards John Luther some tincture of the "insolence of condescension." With the air, let us suppose, of hyper-excellent persons, wise beyond the standard of this world, they took Martin's part, and pointed out to our lay friend his duty under the circumstances.

It might have been better to let well alone. John's backbone became as cast-iron in a moment. Though his heart had relented towards his son, his opinions on religion and the powers and privileges of the priestly order had suffered no change. "What!" exclaimed John, "have you never heard that Scripture commands a man to honour his father and his mother?" My fine, sanctified, sacerdotal gentlemen, have you considered how your monkish virtue shapes itself in relation to the law of God?

The line taken by John—the directness of his appeal to Holy Writ—was disconcerting; for Martin, we recollect, had not paused even to consult his father before rushing into the convent. But John's first outburst, though startling, did not silence the fathers and brethren. They continued their remonstrances. Were not all

earthly claims of small account in comparison with those of the higher life? Was not Martin arrested by the finger-touch of a special Providence, and could he be disobedient to the heavenly vision? "God grant," cried the incorrigible miner, "that your fine vision was not got up by the devil!" Dreadful! Oh, dreadful! But the grim peasant of the moorland, whose blood was now fairly up as when he smote the horse-subduing savage with his own horse-tackle, could not be quieted until he had avowed that even the grand celebration of the day had been a pain to him, and that he would rather have been elsewhere. Was ever such a curmudgeon? Despiser of monks, distruster of priests, probable sympathiser with Hussite heresy—can anything be too bad to suggest of the appalling man? How consoling, meanwhile, for us fathers and brethren, that the son at least is safe, that Martin has no sympathy with such perilous stuff! Fathers and brethren, be not too sure! For the present he sits mute; somewhat ashamed, it may be, of his audacious parent; but John's appeal to Scripture sticks in his heart all the same, a barbed seed which he cannot pluck out, and which may prove to be a seed that has found its *nidus* and will grow.

For the moment, however, things seem to have got hushed up in a reasonably handsome way. John Luther preserves his opinion of all monkeries, of all priestly powers and privileges, but is a rational man, of practical sense and self-command. He does not quarrel with his son, or try, now that he is of full age, to force him to walk in his father's footsteps. John's trade, after

all, was mining, not theology. Except when put upon his mettle, he would not assume to teach monks and priests their business. As he returned, in pensive mood, to his forge, he would recollect that strong men do not cry over spilled milk, and would resolutely adjust himself to the conclusion that Martin's life was, for this world, as good as ended.

Book III.

SPIRITUAL CRISIS.

1507—1509.

Book III.

SPIRITUAL CRISIS.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE DARK VALLEY.

The nursery, school, and college experiences of memorable men are invariably of importance in relation to their subsequent history; but it has not, perhaps, been sufficiently observed that their significance may possibly depend upon contrast and reaction rather than upon unbroken development and a clearly traceable clue of continuity. Luther has now reached his twenty-fourth year, and if there is any prophecy as to his future which his numbered years suggest, it is that he will live a life of devout quietude, warring, if at all, with any influences of the outer world that may dare to lift a rebellious front against the benign authority of the ecclesiastical powers. Hitherto he has chafed only against the anti-clericalism of his father, shrinking from mundane activities and mundane ambitions, and seeking rest for his soul in obedience to his spiritual superiors.

And yet two things are quite certain. The first is that Martin Luther was the main impelling force in one of the most profound and comprehensive revolutions that ever shook to pieces one set of institutions, in order

to make way for another. The second is that the revolution referred to—the Reformation of the sixteenth and succeeding centuries—transacted itself in the soul of Luther before it emerged in history. Byron's somewhat grotesquely but powerfully imaginative expression, "the slumbering earthquake lies pillowed on fire," is a curiously accurate, though figurative, description of the coming revolution as seen in the mind of Luther.

The episode of the lightning-flash had come to an end. Martin had taken the monastic vows, and now the Church had bestowed upon him the power of offering up the eucharistic sacrifice. When he went abroad the simple rustics crowded round him, ready to give coppers or bread and cheese for the soul-saving music of a mass. He kept his "hours" with scrupulous exactness. Of his one-and-twenty chosen saints, three were specially invoked every day, so that they all came round in the course of a week, and no day was vacant of its heavenly sentinels. And yet, instead of attaining to perfect peace, he began to be conscious of spiritual tribulation more terrible than any he had previously known.

In these days of moderation in religion, and of scientific sobriety in emotion, some may ask, "What sense was there in this? Why should he have fallen into any mental tribulation whatsoever? Had he committed crime?" Such are the questions asked by those inquirers who suggest, with candid and cultured air that the Reformation was due to the black blood and acrid, moody, fitful temper of Martin Luther.

It must be avowed that he had nothing on his

conscience which could be deemed gravely criminal or malignantly vicious. His childhood had been dutiful, his boyhood and youth studious, his life pure. What rationality, then, was there in his tormenting himself about sin?

Practically the same question is asked and answered by Lord Macaulay in his biography of Bunyan. The reader is left to infer that Bunyan had fallen into a species of lunacy. He was the victim of spectral illusions and delirious hallucinations, believing himself to have been condemned to eternal perdition by his Maker for the mere sportiveness and ebullience of youth. But it never occurs to Macaulay as a difficulty, that Bunyan, though he recovered from his so-called madness, and became a singularly sensible man, was most firmly convinced that he had not been subject to any delusion or hallucination whatever. A madman does not cease to be such until he *knows* that his fancies were absurd. But Bunyan, and hundreds of others who have given an account of their spiritual experience substantially similar to Bunyan's—men of the intellectual calibre of Cromwell, and the general moral soundness of Wesley and Chalmers—never came to believe that they had been haunted by spectres, or that their agonised self-accusings had been groundless.

Nor ought it to be overlooked that writers who treat the problems of personal character from a non-theological point of view—such writers as Carlyle and Mr. Matthew Arnold—writers who depict spiritual conflict and spiritual victory, take note of mental troubles and

self-reproaches that turn upon no police-court infamies. The troubles occur in what Mr. Arnold might call crises of struggle between the higher self and the lower self. Carlyle, when describing Teufelsdröckh as rent with mental anguish, does not lay to his charge the smallest crime or vice. How strong soever may be a man's distrust of theology, he may take an interest in the growing pains of the soul, the agonised gropings and groanings of the spirit for light.

In a multitude of passages scattered through his works—the Commentary on Galatians is full of them —Luther has told us what he endured; but nowhere do we meet with a delineation of his spiritual conflict in its successive stages. Sufficient grounds exist for believing that the crisis had not occurred, or essentially begun, when he was ordained priest in 1507; and that it *had* occurred, and in essentials had ended, when he proceeded to Wittenberg in 1509; but between these limitary dates we cannot with certainty mark its stages.

As to the essential facts, however, there can be no doubt. In a glow of complacent hopefulness and high-strung resolution he began, after his ordination, to make of himself a model of saintship. To use his own phrase, he would take heaven by storm. Day by day, week by week, he performed every prescribed duty, prayed, watched, fasted. Sometimes, though his physical constitution enabled him to subsist on the scantiest and plainest food, he almost starved himself to death. Sometimes the cold in his cell chilled him to the bone. His emaciation and mental sufferings induced

fainting-fits. His constitution was permanently injured. In imagery of characteristic vividness he describes his anguish. The thunders of Sinai rolled over his soul. The lightnings of Divine wrath smote him as with pangs of everlasting living death. He was hurried from one extreme of impassioned feeling to another, as Milton pictures the transference of the lost from regions of searching fire to regions of thick-ribbed ice. At one moment he strained all his faculties to a paroxysmal intensity in the mortification of sin; at another he fell back upon the mood of rebellious defiance, almost disposed to hurl blasphemous upbraidings at an unrelenting God. His mind was as a troubled sea, raging in storm-tumult, every wave a separate fantasy, a separate cry. Sometimes he thought he had committed the unpardonable sin, or that he had from all eternity been doomed to perdition. The voices of conscience were not one but many, a Lernean crowd, an Iliad of ills, a combination of the horrors symbolised by the fire-vomiting giant, Cacus, by the hound of hell, Cerberus, by the Furies, and by the devil. At moments of desolate abandonment, when God seemed to have utterly cast him off, "the fairest of all created things, the crystal daylight, became insufferable," and he trembled at a falling leaf. He deliberately says that the anguish derived from a sense of God's wrath attained so frightful a poignancy of torment that, had it continued for but a few minutes, he must, from sheer pain, have died.

It was all in vain. His aim had been to scale the Infinite, and he was irresistibly conscious of failure.

He had been determined to do what he believed other saints had done, namely, keep God's law in absolute perfection; and he felt his performance to be sullied. The more perseveringly he washed his hands, the more, as he dolefully complained, did stains accumulate upon them.

Some fervid words which we meet with, among many such, in his Commentary on Galatians, may be trusted to lead us to one prevailing subject of his awe-struck meditation. It is an intolerable thing, he says, for man to search curiously into the Divine majesty. "As God is in His own nature, beyond human measurement, incomprehensible, and infinite, so He is to man's nature intolerable." "He that is a searcher of God's majesty shall be overwhelmed of His glory. I know by experience what I say."

Herein this great religious nature, responsive to and representative of the universal intuitions and instincts of man's religious constitution, attests the fact that the Infinite cannot be immediately known and approached by man. In the philosophical, and at the same time profoundly religious and Biblical, sense, Luther was an Agnostic. But his agnosticism appears never to have even skirted the torrid zone of atheism. I can recall no hint in his writings that he questioned the Divine existence, or doubted that the difficulties of the religious hypothesis of the universe, the hypothesis that all things proceed from the Infinite Spirit, however great they may be, are not to be compared with the difficulties of the *only* alternative

hypothesis, to wit, that the universe is a crash and conflict of material atoms, coming no-whence, going no-whither, and evolving mind only to vex it with the hope of immortality, and then to cast it off into the eternal night. For Luther, as for Dr. Newman, and indeed for Voltaire, it never was a conceivability, a possibility, that there could be no God.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCHOOLMEN TO THE RESCUE.

Poor Martin! The flintiest heart can hardly grudge him a few drops of pity. After all that he had left—after flinging from him his University ambition, closing his beloved books, angering his father, and foregoing the glories of this world—to find himself so bitterly disappointed, so miserably dis-entranced! All the sweetness and elevation which he had hoped for when, invoking kind Saint Anne, he passed into the convent, were gone from him, and had been succeeded by a tormenting sense of unworthiness.

Characteristically he did not regret or revise his decision to follow the clearest guidance he possessed at the time and to enter the convent. Mercy may be denied him; holiness and heaven may never be his portion; but he has renounced the common life, he has set his face towards the celestial city, he kneels, though in anguish, at the feet of God, and he will not go back. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Simply stated, his attempt now was to square the circle of perfection, to keep the law of God completely, to build a tower whose top should reach to heaven. His conscience told him that less than perfect

righteousness would not satisfy the Infinite One, and would not give himself assurance of having attained to the blessed life. Vague as, at this time, his theological knowledge was, he cannot have failed to hear of the grace of God. It would be a cruel misrepresentation of mediæval Christendom to say that it had forgotten the doctrine of grace, or had denied the might of faith. It would be a misapprehension of the religious state and condition of Germany in Luther's boyhood to overlook the preaching of grace and faith in many quarters, —preaching, not listless or half-hearted, but with an accentuation and intensification expressly meant to be corrective of the haziness, incoherence and confusion of the popular teaching. Nor are we to forget that St. Augustine, whose name the Order which Luther had joined supremely honoured, was, pre-eminently, the Doctor of Grace. To some perceptible extent, as distinguished from the Dominicans and the Franciscans, the Order of St. Augustine was the evangelical order.

Let it not be supposed, therefore, that Martin Luther, in realising, with horror and anguish inexpressible, that he was not in a state of salvation, had never heard of grace, or was so crude in his notions of Christianity as to believe that his only hope lay in performing, in his own strength, every requirement of God's law. What he ultimately believed to have been the fatal flaw in his method of striving for salvation presented itself to his mind in a more subtle and plausible form, as elaborated by the Schoolmen. From this we can start with assured confidence, for we have his own lucid

statement of the scholastic view in his Commentary on the Galatians.

The Schoolmen, then, admitted that no man could, of his own nature and free-will, perform any work by which he made God his debtor and earned salvation. But a naturally good work, such as the giving of alms, the saying or hearing of mass, might entitle one to grace of congruence (*meritum de congruo*). It was meet, they said, that God should reward such works, and the way in which He rewarded them was by bestowing the higher grace of worthiness (*meritum de condigno*). The man's works now, being done in grace, did indeed make God a debtor, and earn everlasting life. For the work was no longer a work of mere nature and free-will; it was done in grace, it was acceptable to God, and with it man could purchase his salvation. So far, *teste* Luther, the Schoolmen.

On these terms, which the highest known authorities prescribed, and which probably commended themselves to his own speculative reason, he toiled at the working out of his salvation. The scheme was not without ingenuity. The whole movement of the Schoolmen had in fact, for one of its main objects, to draw out the theory, and to regulate the practice, of Christian religion, in accordance with the dictates of reason. The Schoolmen were rationalists who started from faith. They shrank from obliterating the free-will of man, while maintaining the omnipotence of grace. They worked, no doubt, in absolute obedience to the Church; and it may justly be maintained that Luther, if we

estimate the historical result of his activity, and take into account that he broke, once and for ever, the spell of the Catholic system, was the father of an infinitely more proud, penetrating, and comprehensive rationalism than that of the Schoolmen. But at no period of his life had he any wish or intention to figure in this capacity, and although, at the stage in his spiritual evolution at which we have now arrived, he still sat, a docile pupil, at the feet of the Schoolmen, and may be supposed to have found satisfaction in their theological philosophising, he soon learned to denounce their rationalism no less vehemently than their theology.

For the present we have to realise him as toiling with the concentrated energies of soul and body to procure himself the preliminary grace of congruence, in order that God may grant him the higher boon of saving grace. The description which has been given of his efforts applies, in all its intensity, and with specific appropriation, to this phase of his enterprise. Whatever might be the value of the scholastic scheme, viewed as the solution of one of the permanent problems of speculative theology and of practical religion, the fact that it did not in any measure heal the wounds of his soul admits of no dispute. No faintest glimmer of dawning hope, but deeper and deeper darkness, thickening towards despair, was the general result. His preceptors, his confessors, were perplexed by his case. They thought him a model of virtue, a pattern to the convent, and yet the wailing desolation of his soul became every day more painful and profound.

It is of course evident that, however delicately the Schoolmen might draw the line between grace and nature, they did, in substance, point out to Luther a way in which to make God his debtor and be the architect of his own salvation. And he says a thousand times, repeating the statement with an emphasis that never flags, in every form of affirmation which can be adopted, that the attempt was utterly futile. His taskwork had no tendency, he averred, to awaken affection in his heart towards God, but rather to create aversion. He testifies also to the common failure of monkish pieties and austerities to warm and quicken the heart, or to gladden the life and lend solace in death. Years of loveless service, of routine prayers, of watching, of fasting, of mass-hearing or singing, ended in a state of hard, cold, listless dejection. How was it possible that love should glow in the soul towards a Being who exacted service but manifested no good-will, who asked for love and demanded gratitude without evincing the one or giving cause for the other?

CHAPTER III.

STAUPITZ.

There was no one point of time, no moment, hour, or day, at which, so far as biographical research can ascertain, the clouds lifted from Luther's mind and the sunlight rushed down. If any reader has looked for dramatic surprise of that kind, he may as well know that there is none in store for him. This only we can be quite sure of, that the change was decisive, and that, in its essential and vital characteristics, it had taken place before the spring months of 1509. And though we cannot give the chronology of its stages, we have evidence, ample and explicit, as to how it fell out and wherein it consisted.

Among those men of approved wisdom and of tried skill in dealing with troubled consciences who were called upon to minister to the mind diseased of Martin Luther, by far the most notable was John von Staupitz. He had become vicar of the Augustinian monks for the Thuringian province in 1503. In 1504 he had recast the constitutions of the Order. No man could more sincerely accept the evangelical traditions of the Augustinians than he; and under his auspices the brothers vowed to be Christians not in the letter only

but in the spirit, and to obey not as slaves of the law but as free by grace.

Rich in gifts of many kinds, fervently pious yet not austere, Staupitz was exquisitely fitted to be a nursing father to spiritual children. A patrician born, well cultured, experienced in the ways of men, delicately sympathetic and friendly, he carried with him the rare enchantment of perfect kindness expressed in perfect manners. Moving hither and thither, now in Germany now in Rome, now listening to the doubts, difficulties, tribulations, of young monks, now brightening with the joy of his sweet converse the kind, considerate, patient face of his sovereign Prince and friend, Frederick of Saxony, now interesting by his intelligence and tact a worldly-minded Pope Julius, who had not the heart to cross him or to deny sanction to his pretty projects of monastic reform, Staupitz was one of the typical figures of his time, one of the most engaging to be met with in all its multitudinous groups. He, like so many, had been touched with the breath of that great wind which was then only beginning to sing in the air, but, within a very few years, was to become a storm. To the reforming party he clearly belonged, little as he dreamed of revolution, little as he realised that the new and the old must clash in antagonism. The watchwords of the new movement—grace, faith, Christ—were familiar to Staupitz. It seems to have surprised no one—to have suggested to no one that offence was done to the Church or the Papacy—when he enjoined his monks to be sedulous in the study

of Scripture. It is entirely beyond question that when his attention was called to the afflictions of brother Martin, his theology was, in all essential respects, what has since been called, by distinction, the theology of the Reformation.

We may conceive Staupitz as a contrast at almost all points to old John Luther. He was Martin's second father, as Dame Cotta was his second mother, but we know the successive fathers much better than we know Margaret and Ursula. Angular, abrupt, irascible, thinking of priests and monks half with contempt for their want of brains, half with a snarling grudge on account of their idleness, John Luther was a pre-Reformation Protestant of no amiable kind. On theological questions he would, doubtless, except on extraordinary occasions, observe a modest, partly also a prudential, silence; and though the irreducible *minimum* and vital spark in his own religion was faith in Christ, he was not generally communicative on the subject, never thought that it was his part to teach the clergy their business, and never, in converse with taciturn, meditative, pensive Martin on spiritual subjects, came to really close quarters. Staupitz, on the other hand, was professionally a theologian, and it is difficult to imagine how any one capable of forming an opinion on a strictly theological question should have conversed with him seriously on religious matters without discovering that his views were irreconcilably at variance with those of the Schoolmen. Pope Julius II., however, knew more of state-craft and of soldiering than of theology, and would probably

have jeered if any of his heavy doctors had warned him that danger might lurk in the silver tones of Staupitz. That the latter was aware—vaguely, perhaps, yet really—of the existence of a Church within the Church, and of the imminence of great change, can hardly be doubted; but there were no fiery and passionate elements in his nature, and he seems to have quietly assumed that reformation might take place in a gradual, safe, pacific fashion. He had himself found the light to be good; why should it not gently envelop the world? But, in fundamentals, his theology was the same as John Luther's.

Such was the soul's physician who now was called in to consider the puzzling case of brother Martin. Here was a young man whom no one accused of criminality, but who nevertheless was "on fire within," literally fainting and perishing under a sense of sin. On this matter of sin the first wise word of Staupitz appears to have been spoken. Religion, whatever else may be true in connection with it—thus we may suppose him to have made his approaches—cannot possibly controvert sanity and common sense. You, Martin, must, first of all, cease wailing, raging, howling, and command yourself enough to consider what these sins of yours, in point of fact, are. You find that, among a thousand points of ritual observance, you have made this or that mistake—omitted a few words of prayer, accidentally dropped a little sacramental wine, or the like—and so you retrace your steps, you recur to your observances, you augment your mortifications, persuaded

that your soul is not white enough for the eye of God. Really this is to turn the whole matter into absurdity. Those sins of yours that you torture yourself about are mere fanciful sins, mere got-up sins, oversights in this or that exercise, mere nursery sins like those for which children are set in the corner. The sins for which Christ died are real sins, as real—though they may never have broken out in positive act—as theft, murder, dishonour done to father or mother. All this life-and-death effort to attain to ceremonial cleanness is child's play.

Astonishing doctrine! Martin pauses and ponders in bewilderment. What can the good Father mean? He, Martin, had stolen nothing, nor murdered any one; and if he had dishonoured his father—and, indeed, his conscience was not quite clear on that point—he had thought that, in dishonouring John Luther, he did God service. Could the kind vicar intend him to cast his sorrows to the winds, to look up in complacent satisfaction, to believe that he had no sins worth mention? Staupitz would not countenance such an idea for one moment. Martin, he would fully admit, was right in deeming himself a sinner. But he mistook the nature of sin. Its seat was the heart; the essential nature of sin was indifference to God, want of love for God, want of faith in God. The germs of murder and all wickedness lay in those evil propensities of the soul which were repugnant to holiness and imbued with aversion to goodness, with hatred to God. If he was to see himself a sinner, let him do so in rational and manful

verity. God asked his heart: had he given that? If not, he was a sinner indeed.

One can well believe that Staupitz might at first seem to Martin only to plunge him in deeper gulfs of despair than had yet appalled him. It might be difficult—almost killingly difficult—to avoid for an hour all specific infraction of moral or ceremonial law and thus earn grace of congruence—but it was not, in the nature of things, impossible. There had been saints in the past; why might not he, poor, fainting Martin, do what others had done, and win the halo of saintship? But to change the very nature and current of his soul —to convert into glowing love that shuddering terror with which he had always regarded God—how was this, for any man, possible? Martin was keenly logical; sharper than a fiery needle; tenacious, too, in an extreme degree of notions once rooted in his mind; and devoid of fear in *any* form. He did not shrink from crossing swords with Staupitz in dialectical conflict. What God is this of yours, most kind and pious vicar, who demands impossibilities from his puny children, and sends them to hell for not performing them?

Well, perhaps you, Martin, Staupitz would in effect rejoin, may find comfort in accusing God, and may think that there is no mystery or miracle in the ways of the Almighty. But that was not what St. Augustine taught. That was not what St. Paul thought. At all events, let us keep to facts, and not talk at random. It will be time to accuse God of bidding man work impossibilities when it has been proved that He demands

from man *any* work. Had it never occurred to Martin that salvation might be an affair not of human effort but of Divine grace, a work not of man but of God? In all his virtuous endeavours to procure for himself the scholastic grace of congruence, had he never bethought him of a grace that came by faith? If Jesus Christ, in His life and in His death, was the manifestation of God's love, and if the one essential command laid by God upon man was that he should believe in God's love and have his soul filled with the Divine flame of responsive affection, then the wise thing might be to abate that frantic intensity of effort to square the circle of mechanical performance, and to *accept* the righteousness of God.

Here was food for reflection. It is certain that the main stress of the influence of Staupitz tended to turn Martin's ideas as to what was necessary for salvation upside down—to introduce, as Copernicus had done in the physical sphere, a celestial in place of a terrestrial centre, and induce Martin to take the work of saving his soul out of his own hands and place it in the hands of God. Martin listened with eager interest, profoundly impressed—agitated, we need not doubt, as were the pilgrims in Dante's poem when, after long wandering in regions of agony and terror, they beheld in the far distance the "trembling of the waves" in the first dawn of hope. But the revolution that took place in his mind was not sudden or swift, and it will not be unprofitable, nor ought it to be uninteresting, to contemplate it in one or two of its phases and incidents.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BIBLE.

Staupitz, having reconnoitred Martin, and attained to some clearness of idea as to how the fortress and fastness of his spiritual malady was to be reduced, gave him the advice to read his Bible. On entering the convent, he had betaken himself to the Scriptures, and during his novitiate had devoted much time to their study. But an eminent scholastic Doctor of Erfurth University—Arnold, of Usingen—had, as we saw, given him a hint, probably about the end of his first year, that he would not find much in the book. With eager curiosity and vivid interest, but not in a specially earnest mood, he ran over the Old and New Testaments—this we may safely conclude—in his first year; was then diverted from constant Bible reading; and took up the matter once more, in compliance with the advice of Staupitz, and now in a profoundly earnest spirit.

Let no enthusiastic member of the Bible Society make himself happy with the thought that the Book had any talismanic effect upon Luther. There is good reason to believe that he read it, once at least, from the first page to the last, without finding in it what he,

with more emphasis than any modern man, subsequently declared to be the method of salvation. "I was brought up from a child," says Dr. Newman, "to take great delight in reading the Bible." Martin Luther did not see a complete Bible till he was twenty years old; and it was not until the strange awakening flash of heaven's light from a saved soul—the soul of Staupitz—struck along the Biblical page that it yielded up to him its open secret.

One point of importance was that he now took up the Bible in the distinct assurance that its authority in matters of faith was final. Not only was Staupitz sure to lay this down, but it had been expressly affirmed to Luther by Trutvetter, a greater scholastic authority even than Arnold of Usingen. In matters of conscience, Trutvetter had said, the canonical books of Scripture were without appeal. Into the question of the origin of their authority Luther did not enter, now or subsequently. It was not the question of his age, and in his own mental constitution there was no speculative tendency, no trace of scepticism. Both the parties into which, in shadowy masses becoming every day more clearly defined, Christendom was then divided, accepted the arbitrament of Holy Writ.

Whether from the influence of Staupitz, or from a concurrence of that and other causes, Luther's new study of the Scriptures was attended with results which he had never experienced before. The patriarchs, the psalmists, the prophets, the apostles seemed to speak with new tongues, as if a miracle-working Spirit

gave them utterance. The more closely and continuously he read, the more vivid became his realisation of the often-attested fact that, for an earnestly religious man, no book in the world has such significance as the Bible.

His manner of reading was, to a considerable extent, critical; he paid strict attention to the language of Scripture, and began to address himself strenuously to the acquisition of Greek. With unqualified assent of intellect, and fervid enthusiasm of feeling, he welcomed the efforts of those scholars who, headed by Erasmus, were wiping the dusts of ignorance, venerable with a thousand years, from the Scriptural writings, and showing, in burnished clearness, the original text. But at an early stage—so early that we find it a confirmed habit with him about as soon as we can say that his spiritual change had been effected—he conjoined with mere grammatical consideration of the text an indefinable somewhat of spiritual intuition, to which he attached still greater importance. No doubt he intended to indicate, reverently and with modesty, but firmly, a Divine influence and help. With this, the least critical of readers might hear God speaking to him in Scripture; without this, the critic whose learning shed rich illumination on the mere letter of the Bible, might be blind to its inner meaning. A man as rough and unlearned as the miner of Mansfeld might have this inner light; a man as radiantly cultured as Erasmus might have it not.

Part — one essential part or principle — of the

delicately wise method adopted by Staupitz in dealing with the exceptional nature he had taken in hand, clearly was to let Martin feel his way along, and, while really guided onwards by another, to seem—nay, to a great extent, to be—his own instructor. One can easily imagine how suggestive words, thrown out by Staupitz, would lead Luther on. "The righteousness of God;" "The just shall live by faith." What mystery was it that dwelt in phrases like these, and that appeared to haunt the Bible through all its books? The man Adam, whose spiritual experience is the first chapter of the religious history of the human race, falls because he has not faith in God—faith involving trust and obedience. The transcendent rightness of Abraham's religion consists in his having faith in God's promise of the all-blessing Seed. The soul of meaning in the entire history of the Jewish nation is that faith in God is a better portion than battle steed or glittering sword, or all the power and splendour of this world. Jesus Christ, instead of softening the claims of Divine law, carried them inwards, and demanded not only the negative homage of external obedience, but the free and joyful service of the heart. He too, always, in the last resort, demanded faith, and said that, except through faith in Him, moral law could not become spiritual life. And when, arrested in a manner so strangely like that by which Martin had been brought to a pause beside the lonely hamlet of Stotternheim, Paul of Tarsus became the greatest of the apostles of Christ, he too proclaimed that salvation was by faith. To this effect spake

Augustine. So did St. Bernard. The doctrine had in its favour a *consensus* of the spiritual leaders of mankind. Like that line of beacon-fires that flashed, from headland to headland, through the deep night, from Asia to Greece, the news that Troy had fallen, this luminous chain of concurrent testimonies to the religion of faith and grace connected the present with the remotest past.

Can we not figure to ourselves that a considerable change would now take place in the current of Luther's ideas? Would he not see in a new light that interminable trundling of his wheelbarrow, with a view to piling up a hill of merit of congruence, from which to leap upon the battlements of heaven? Would he not look with some impatience upon the intricate reticulation of fine-spun theory wherewith his friends the Schoolmen had veiled the face of God speaking in the Word? Would not, in short, the whole firmament of his ideas on religious matters pass, from zenith to nadir, through a movement of revolution, gradual indeed in the grandeur of its rolling, but irreversible, the old stars setting, fresh constellations beaming into clearness, the entire panorama of the heavens becoming new?

CHAPTER V.

METANOIA.

Of the actual interchange of question and answer between Luther and Staupitz we have no record. That the two did often, in the deep seclusion of Martin's cell, pass hours in solemn colloquy we know; materials, perfectly trustworthy in kind, and not insignificant in quantity, from which to shape a just idea of what took place, are in existence; but it is left to imagination to give colour and circumstance to the scene. Happily, however, in one instance at least, imagination derives pertinent and precious help from Luther himself. In a quite inestimable letter,* written indeed a good many years after the conversations alluded to, but fresh as dew in the vividness of its recollection and the distinctness of its narrative, he recounts the steps by which, with Staupitz leading him by the hand, he had proceeded from a false to a true theory and practice of repentance. It is to Staupitz himself that he writes. With this letter it will be to our profit to concern ourselves for a little.

One remark, *à propos* of that verification which science and modern common-sense have been invited to

* De Wette, 67.

apply to this whole history of Luther's progress to spiritual manhood, will, perhaps, not be superfluous before we begin. Unless the subject of a moral start in life, a renewing and elevation of the character, a framing of a code of principles, and a scheme of conduct, be dismissed as fantastic, the matter of repentance, name it as we may, must form an integral part of the business. For repentance is the setting of the lower ideal, now to be abandoned, in the light of the higher, now to be reached forward to. Repentance is the abrupt and pungent separation between the worse and the better; between the meanness, the selfishness, the falsity, the moral decrepitude, the sensual and serpentine dust-eating, of the unworthy or less worthy time, and the discreet sense, the healthy enjoyment, the unselfish ardour, of the more worthy. From the point of view of ethical science and the art of conduct, the problem of repentance must have an interest for all intelligent men.

Luther introduces the subject by referring to those "most delightful and health bringing communications," by which Staupitz used to bring solace to him in his troubles. *Jucundissimas et salutares fabulas tuas.* What a text for imagination to work upon in realising the meetings of Staupitz and Martin in the quiet cell! Staupitz had said that *pœnitentia*—penance, penitence, repentance—was not true and genuine unless it began in and arose from love of righteousness and of God. The false and erroneous way of viewing penitence was, he said, to regard love of righteousness and

of God as its end and consummation rather than as its principle and beginning.

This seemed a startling inversion. But it intensely impressed Martin. Staupitz's words clung to his mind, and as he read, and again read, in the Bible, he met with more and more to prove to him that Staupitz was right.

The result he describes with so warm a glow of feeling, so bright a resilience of lyric joy, that the stiff-jointed, stern-featured Latin vocables seem to dance beneath his touch. The colour and movement of the original are sadly marred in translation, but it would not be fair to make no attempt to set before the reader this jet of fine and fiery utterance, so brief yet so expressive, as it rose from the heart's heart of Martin Luther: "This saying of yours clung to me like the sharp arrow of a potent archer. Forthwith I began to compare it with the various Scriptural passages that teach the doctrine of penitence; when lo! there transacted itself in my experience the most joyful sport and game that ever was. The Bible words on all hands took part with me in the play, laughing out and dancing their joyful acquiescence in this opinion of yours. Formerly there had hardly, within the whole range of Scripture, been a more bitter word for me than this same 'penitence'—and that although I had sedulously tried to disguise my true feelings from God and to express, as sincere, an affection that was feigned, and as free, an affection that was forced. Now nothing in all the Bible has for me a sweeter or more grateful sound than

penitence. For thus do the commands of God melt into sweetness when we understand that they are to be read not merely in printed books but in the wounds of the sweetest Saviour."

What, then, was the point—the essential purport—of Staupitz's electrifying suggestion? Simply this: that penitence, if true, is not a ladder leading *up*, by prayer, by fasting, by mortification of the body, to pardon and to God, but a ladder leading *down* from God to the penitent, as the ladder descended to Jacob in his dream, a ladder on which the angels of grace and mercy carried repentance to the soul. The interminable treadwheel of ecclesiastical penance was thus exchanged for simple recipiency of Divine grace. Man becomes nothing: God becomes all: God, revealed as Love in the wounds of Christ, and changing man's disposition towards Himself from doubt, indifference, or hatred, into contrite response of love.

This was what Staupitz intended Luther to learn. This is the key to the theology of Luther, to the theology of the Reformation. With all his might—in labour and in sorrow—he had striven to attain to love of God; but the force of penitential drill-exercise could not create in his heart an affection that was not there. Rather it tended to chill and freeze whatever ardour of affectionate aspiration there lay in his breast when he entered the Convent. He might make a great show of repentance, but it was a thing got up, an artifice, a fiction (*fictum*); he might try to persuade others or himself that he had true love for God, but it was at

best a product of coercion (*coactum*). When love, welling from the heart of God—love attested by the life and death of Christ—love offered in infinite measure, not for price paid or work done, but of grace—when this made appeal to the penitent heart, then responsive affection awoke, and in one transcendent act of living self-surrender, the soul turned from sin and gave itself to God.

But we have not yet done with our letter. Having told how Staupitz's word had been an illumination to him in his reading of Scripture, Luther goes on to say that, when he turned from the *pœnitentia*, penitence or penance, of the Vulgate to the μετάνοια of the original Greek, he derived from it new and exquisite confirmation of the position that repentance is a spiritual affair, a thing of the mind and disposition. The Greek word could not possibly mean a piling up of penitential performances, but must imply, to begin with, a change in the affections. It was the word of all others adapted to express transition and transformation of soul, a change like that symbolised by Abraham's journey, at God's bidding, from the land of his birth into that which was appointed him.

In point of fact the change of language, from Greek to Latin, on which Luther here touches, is one of the most memorable of which mention is made in the history of the world. The change from *metanoia* to *pœnitentia* typifies the immense modification of the general Christian scheme which was due to the supremely forensic genius of Rome. The ideal

tenderness, the impassioned loveliness, the entranced spirituality, of Christian Hellenism, expressed or indicated in *metanoia*, became rigid as iron in that *pœnitentia* which the jurist-divines of the Roman Church interpreted and exemplified in penance.

Between the day when Staupitz's revealing word on repentance broke Luther's scholastic dream, and that on which he wrote this letter, months and years had passed. The path which he traversed with a glance of retrospective thought had been one of many and varied experiences. But his knowledge and conviction on the subject of repentance, and his mood of fiery indignation when he stepped forward to say that the people were being foully deluded by lying offers of pardon for sin, were the logical and natural issue of that pregnant sentence uttered by Staupitz in the Erfurth cell.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW PRINCIPLE OF LIFE.

Little need be added to what has been said already—if what has been said has been understood—in order to enable us to enter with Luther the Holy of Holies and appreciate his new principle of life.

We found him earnestly counselling souls wrapt in a whirlwind of troubles and terrors to "abstain from curious searching of God's majesty." This he declared to be "intolerable to man's body and much more to his mind." Such attempts to scale infinitude could end only in a fall like that of Lucifer and the loss of all vision of the Divine in "horrible despair." "For, as God is in His own nature immeasurable, incomprehensible and infinite, so He is to man's nature intolerable." *

How then can the sinner be pardoned and accepted? By seeking God in Christ. "Whensoever thou hast to do in the matter of justification, and disputest with thyself how God is to be found that justifieth and accepteth sinners; where and in what sort He is to be sought; then know thou that there is no other God beside this man Christ Jesus. Embrace Him and cleave

* Comment. Galat. chap. i

to Him with thy whole heart, setting aside all curious speculations of the Divine Majesty: for he that is a searcher of God shall be overwhelmed of His glory. I know by experience what I say." "Setting aside all curious speculations of God's unsearchable majesty, all cogitations of works, of traditions, of philosophy, yea, of God's law, too, run straight to the manger and embrace this Infant, the Virgin's little Babe, in thine arms, and behold Him as He was born, as He lay on His mother's breast, as He grew up, holding familiar intercourse with men, teaching, dying, rising again, ascending up above all heavens, and having power above all things. By this means shalt thou be able to shake off all terrors and errors, like as the sun driveth away the clouds."*

So much for the Object of worship: Christ: God revealed in Man. As Divine essence, as Infinite Life, God is beyond grasp of finite Intelligence. "No man," Luther expressly says, "knoweth God." By faith man believes in God, though he cannot see Him. But in Christ, God is visible. Christ is the outgoing God: outgoing in power, as the Creator; outgoing in expression and teaching, as the Word; outgoing in love, as the Saviour.

In framing an explanation of the way in which faith appropriates the Christ-God, as the soul's life and salvation, Luther not unnaturally trenches upon mystery, and may seem to be, or even may be, obscure. The secrets of the spirit's life are not to be set forth in glib

* Comment. on the Galatians, chap. i.

lucidity. Faith, "if it be true faith," is, he says, "a sure trust and confidence of the heart, and a firm consent whereby Christ is apprehended. So that Christ is the object of faith, yea, rather, even in faith Christ Himself is present. Faith, therefore, is a certain obscure knowledge, or rather darkness which seeth nothing, and yet Christ, apprehended by faith, sitteth in this darkness as God on Sinai and in the temple sat in the midst of darkness."*

Practically this means that, with the concentrated energy of the soul, Christ is accepted as the principle and power of a new spiritual life. Christ in the Christian is the righteousness of God, the righteousness which God rejoices in as a reflection of His own holiness. Righteousness is not in any sense man's, except as dwelling in him. "In this we work nothing, we render nothing unto God, but only we receive and suffer another to work in us, that is to say, God."†

Luther's theology has in the roots of it a deep affinity for the transcendentalism or mysticism of Tauler, and other devout spirits of the later mediæval time, who found nothing but aridity in the formalisms of the Church system, and sought relief in transporting visions of union with God. But he was still more strictly the soul's brother of St. Augustine and St. Paul, and had no conscious sympathy with the quietism of the mystics. His instincts were practical, and the action of his mind was in the main logical. Having

* Comment. Galat. chap. ii.

† Ibid. chap. i

once accepted the principles of the theology of grace, he applied them with a comprehensiveness, a decision, a burning clearness, which soon carried him beyond his teacher, Staupitz. For Luther—who so long had trembled at the thought of God, and who had seen even in Christ an avenging Judge—the one sin now was to doubt the Divine benevolence. The motive power of his Christianity had become the love of God, manifested in Christ. If his scheme is well-founded, then every Christian knows, with an assurance parallel to his faith in his own existence, that the Almighty Spirit cares for him, loves him. Every pulse and thrill of love for God in his heart is met by a responsive pulse in the heart of the Universal Spirit. If this is an illusion, it is an illusion of stupendous potency; and one glance of earnest reflection along the general consequences of the position will make us aware that its effect, in elevating and purifying the character, must be in exact proportion and accordance to the elevation and nobleness of our idea of God. If our God is a hard and narrow God—a God capable of caprice and favouritism—then our religion will be the quintessence of baseness. If our God is the Infinite Wisdom, the Infinite Love, the Infinite Moral Perfection, then our religion is unsurpassably glorious.

Henceforward Luther's entire system of thought and feeling, of belief and practice, turned upon one grand antithesis, which we may safely state in the terms that Shakespeare applies to it, "grace" and "rude will." Certain words stood with him for what was

wrong, certain other words for what was right, in the spiritual sphere. The spiritually right was what was vitalised by God; the spiritually wrong was what did not possess this Divine breath of life. Work mechanically done could be of no spiritual value. The thrill of affection, turning service into joy, was the proof that the human child had found its Divine Father. How, said Luther in effect, could the Almighty Spirit care for dead works? How could the servile industry of the slave, impelled by fear, resemble the doings of filial affection?

It will scarcely be disputed that, in respect of ethical verification, Luther's doctrine comes out well. No virtue has ethical worth that does not proceed from the heart. Only think for a moment of any relation of spirit to spirit—mutual friendship, reciprocated affection: can such be constituted on the terms of a business partnership—so much to be done on this side, so much to be received on that? Friendship may arise in those circumstances, but it can do so only by contact of spirit with spirit, by the mystical radiation of joy and acceptance between soul and soul, not as a matter of legal obligation. Who is so rude of thought and feeling as to dream that love, say married love, can be bought by millions of money, or by titles, or by principalities, or earned by stipulated tasks? Nay, is it not true that affection is repelled rather than attracted by exaction of price? Love and life and freedom evade compulsion and are shy of law. If an irresistible potentate commands you to lay a million bricks one upon another, he

certainly will not teach you to love him in the process. It was exactly such an enterprise of bricklaying that Luther was engaged in while torturing soul and body in the Augustine convent at Erfurth ; and the fiery and envenomed sting of his agony lay in the distinct consciousness that, at the end of each prostrating series of mortifications, he loved God as little as at the beginning —probably less. It is the voice of all the sound ethical science that ever existed in this world that affection has no price but affection, that love alone wins love.

Similarly it admits of verification that the response of love is in proportion to the preciousness, the greatness, the glory of the love responded to ; and therefore it is as sure as any ethical thesis can be that, if Luther believed, with the unwavering, unlimited certitude of faith, that the Infinite God loved him, then he, Luther, would be transported with the paroxysmal vehemency of his love for God. And this was, in truth, the result. From the time when, as he immovably believed, Christ was formed in him, and he became assured of the infinite love of God, the new affection inspired and dominated his life. In proof of its reality, in manifestation of its power, he could at any moment have faced death with a smile.

Book IV.

INDUSTRIOUS PEACE.

1509—1517.

Book IV.

INDUSTRIOUS PEACE.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW DEPARTURE.

Luther had many conversations with Staupitz, and these were of importance not only from their bearing upon his spiritual history, but from their furnishing occasion for him to imprint a vivid and indelible sense of his power and originality upon his preceptor. From that time forth any one who happened to ask Staupitz whether he had among his monks a man that could be depended on for man's work—trustworthy in every office, reliable in all emergencies—was likely to hear of Martin Luther. A spiritual friendship, of the closest, tenderest kind, sprang up between them. Martin saw in Staupitz the wise and gentle instructor, through whose loving ministry the dayspring from on high, the healing brightness of God's great morning, had visited him; and Staupitz was moved as deeply as his somewhat lightly built nature permitted by the joy of spiritual paternity, and the knowledge that he had gotten a man, and *such* a man, from the Lord.

Martin was as one who began to go about after recovery from a long and terrible illness. He had been

in distress; he was now happy: he had been crippled in his activity; he could now throw his mind with freedom and force into study or work. He had been groping and stumbling as among tombs in the night; he now saw his path, and put down his foot with firmness. The change in himself involved a modification in his position towards others. Hitherto he had leant to the side of ecclesiastical use and wont, to the Papal and scholastic side; he was now one of the most ardent spirits in the party of reform. Ardent, but as yet without pugnacious vehemence, or presentiment of coming war.

It is necessary, however, to say that the change which had taken place, though marked enough to entitle us to use strong terms in describing the contrast between the darkness and distress of his past and the luminous calm and gladness of his present, did not issue in such settled peace that there were no subsequent periods of gloom and wretchedness. During his whole life he remained liable at intervals to paroxysms of spiritual distress, when, in his own language, God hid His face from him. In such seasons his faith was temporarily shaken under temptation. He had the firmest conviction of the personality of Satan, whose malignity and cunning he regarded as far transcending any human standard, and whose jealous fury waxed hot in proportion to the clearness and the ravishing sweetness of those revelations of Divine Love with which the tempted soul had been blessed. Joy as of the seventh heaven had, in Luther's case as in Paul's, its antithesis

and reaction in the buffetings of this dark spirit. No modern reader, however, is likely to doubt that the sufferings of Luther in what he called the assaults (*Anfechtungen*) of the devil were largely due to peculiarities in his physical and mental constitution, as well as to that temperament of genius which is commonly attended with fluctuations of feeling between the extremes of rapt exaltation and deathlike sinking of heart.

It is highly probable that for some time after the crisis of his spiritual history his mental troubles were in complete abeyance. That he made himself useful in the convent, and grew in favour with all good men, is certain. By general effectiveness, by loyal industry, by conspicuous sense, he rose to influence in his own neighbourhood; and some laudatory whisper of him began to circulate in the monasteries of Saxony. There is no reason to believe that, even now, he was shaken in his allegiance to his Church, or swerved from loyalty and reverent submission to the Pope.

The system of the Papacy before the Reformation was much more large and lax than modern Protestants are apt to realise. Precision in the definition of dogma, except among professional students of theology, was unknown. There was in the atmosphere a vast amount of what can correctly enough be called Protestantism, but it was not much persecuted because it was not much feared. Staupitz and Luther were permitted to take the monastic system in their own way; and so taking it they did not, during long years, and Staupitz

never did, discover an essential antagonism between it and the evangelical doctrine. *Without* grace, the conventual system, with its endless elaboration of observances, was an organisation of despair. *With* grace, it might be filled, from top to bottom, with spirit and with truth. To create or evoke affection for God in the heart by piling up millions of bricks, as the legal price of His favour, was an eternally hopeless task; but if you were convinced, by the voice of God speaking direct to your inmost soul in the miracle of grace, that He infinitely loved you, then, as a proof and manifestation of answering affection, even the piling one upon another of millions of bricks might be useful as a lesson of obedience, and easy as a labour of love. Staupitz, in his capacity of vicar, took care to instruct his monks in the doctrine of grace, to imbue ritualistic observances with vital fire. To the last he recognised no insuperable difficulty in conjoining monastic life, and adherence to the general system of the Latin Church, with acceptance of the doctrine of grace. Of Luther this cannot be said. He taught for many years, with a vehemence never surpassed, that the Papal Church and the conventual system did obscure, or neutralise, or pervert, the essential truth of God, to the deadly peril of souls. But he never ceased to admit that, both before and during his own time, there were, in the Church of Rome, and in convents owning the sway of the Pope, Christians not a few who had been transformed in the spirit of their minds and made subjects of creative grace.

These things being so, another question arises. Why did not Luther's acquiescence in the system of the Papacy continue to the end? Why did he not remain in his convent and live and die a satisfied member of the Church of Rome? This is one of the leading questions to be answered in the course of his biography. It is obvious, however, that the fact of his having so long professed and exhibited loyalty may do service either on the Protestant or the Popish side of the main controversy. The Papist may say that, *if* he stayed in the Roman Church so long, he could not have had much to complain of. The Protestant may say that, *since* he stayed so long, he would never have come out at all, unless the discoveries which he gradually made of the badness of Popery had overborne his patience.

We shall have opportunity to interrogate Luther as to his motives and methods when we arrive at those turning-points and landmarks in his career which suggest their exposition. Few, however, it may be hoped, are foolish enough to believe that the Reformation was a planned thing, cut out and arranged by one man or a plurality of men. Not in that fashion do the great movements which constitute the evolutionary process of history take place. Luther knew well that he did not design the Reformation. God, he devoutly believed, found the chariot and horses, and fixed the stages of the journey; and he added with pathetic earnestness that he, at least, was one of God's blind horses, and that, if he had known how stern was the work appointed him

to do, he would have chosen rather to remain in the quiet meadow.

In the life of an epoch-making man—which Milton has taught us to view as a poem writ in expressive hieroglyphics—we have not only great motives, great ideas, great spiritual forces, but a machinery of incident and event by which these may be displayed. In the absence of certain circumstances, Luther's life, though it could hardly have failed to be great and memorable, might have been silent and secluded. It was, doubtless, one of the imperious instincts of his new life that he should seek to irradiate the world with the light that warmed his own soul. But he was under no impulse of a vain, self-seeking kind, to emerge into the public gaze. To nurse his household flame, to enjoy converse and communion with such sweet spirits as Staupitz, to glide through the daily routine of prayer and praise in the monastery, would have sufficed him. But circumstances occurred which rendered it impossible for Luther to remain silent; events furnished a machinery for the display of his motives and his powers; and the result was the historical drama of the Reformation.

CHAPTER II.

FREDERICK AND HIS UNIVERSITY.

One of those circumstances to which was due Luther's sudden appearance upon the stage of European life presents itself about this time. Frederick, Elector of Saxony, engaged with the establishment of his new University at Wittenberg, was advised to secure him as a professor. The connection thus begun became one of the cardinal facts in Luther's history; and it will be necessary, and not unpleasant, for us to attain to some clearness of idea as to the character and position of Frederick.

He was twenty years older than Luther, and succeeded his father Ernest in the Government of Saxony three years after Luther's birth. Next to the Kaiser and the Pope, he was, for the boy Luther, the greatest potentate in the world; but there was nothing in his personality or fame to impress a boyish imagination, and though respected and loved by his subjects, as well as honoured for his wisdom by all his contemporaries, he excited no enthusiasm. No personage of the period was more typical of its general characteristics as a time of transition between an irretrievably decadent past and a present struggling into life and shape. He was mediæval, and yet he appears in history as gradually

rising out of the mediæval dusk and welcoming, though not without many fears, misgivings, hesitations, half-nesses, the new order of things.

How much might have worn a different aspect if Frederick had been born in the same year with Luther! In that case, twenty years of the world's most awakening history, twenty years of Columbus voyaging, of printed books, of Erasmus Commentaries, would have passed over him while still in the fervid recipiency of youth. And he would have come into touch with Luther while the fiery blood of opening manhood was in his veins as well as in Martin's. Had the Prince believed in the prophet as young men believed in him, who can tell what might have been the result! Whether, all things considered, such a state of things would have been better for the world may, however, be doubted. The force of Luther was volcanic—wanted tempering rather than fanning—and Frederick's mode of tempering it was morally very noble and not injudicious. At all events, when his friend Staupitz first mentioned to him that a man of eminent quality, of intensest evangelical fervour, and the sparkling eyes of genius, had appeared among the monks of Erfurth, Frederick was already in the afternoon of life, versed in the fallacies of hope, beyond all capability of relapse into the glorious elation and expectancy of youth.

Solid ability and sagacity Frederick must have possessed, or his own generation and all subsequent historians have missed his measure; but he had no genius —nor much power of sympathising with the brilliancies

and audacities of genius. With the simplicity and sincerity of an antique shepherd king, he made it his ambition to rule his Saxons well, and to fill worthily the first place among the Electoral Princes of the German Empire. He was the most clement and kind of sovereign personages. "Why hang a poor thief?" he would say: "You cannot bring him to life again." Of him alone, perhaps, among princes, it is on record that having raised money by taxation, and finding that shift could be made without it, he returned it to the pockets of his subjects. It was one of his special pleasures to deal out corn to poor farmers in compensation for injury done to their crops by game. There was a poverty about the court of Frederick more illustrious than all the splendours of opulence, and it could be truly said of him that he liked better to know that the brown loaf was on the peasant's board than to see the glittering of gold-plate on his own. On the wall of his bedroom he had inscribed the Homeric adage that the shepherd of the people must watch while the people sleep; and in his case this was not the vapid boast of a sovereign coxcomb.

A man of slow pace but sure—careful in all things, invincibly patient. He had been known to write and rewrite a letter twenty times before letting it leave his hand. There were some who muttered that he could never be done, that he was slow because dull. Spalatin, whose Life of Frederick is the authority for these traits, hurls at these gainsayers the example of Quintus Fabius, whose judicious cunctation saved the Roman

commonwealth. But we may be very sure that the gainsayers had some colour for their criticisings. He had played important parts, however, and with reasonable distinction. In 1496 he had been appointed Vicar of the Empire. In 1507, in the absence of Kaiser Maximilian, he exercised supreme authority in Germany. As Field-Marshal of the Imperial army he had conducted, amid general satisfaction, the war against Venice.

But we are mainly concerned with his characteristics in respect of religion and culture. He was a truly devout man, his religion being that of the later mediæval time, when reverent and high-souled men still cherished the conception of Christendom as a visible kingdom of God, in which official persons were God's servants. Had he lived a couple of centuries earlier, he would have headed a crusade. He actually went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre. He thought himself happy in being the possessor of an immense and far-famed hoard of relics. Begun by Bernhard, an Electoral Prince of the twelfth century, it had been enriched by the gatherings of many pious Electors and the gifts of Popes, Cardinals, Archbishops, and friendly potentates of the secular order. In 1499, when the new church in Wittenberg, which Frederick designed for its reception, was complete, the sacred hoard consisted, in all, of 6,705 articles. Of these no fewer than 331 connected themselves with the person of Jesus Christ, including clothes, teeth, hair. There were parts of the children slaughtered at Bethlehem, straw and hay from the manger where Christ lay, thread which the

Madonna had spun, and milk from her breast. A Church so rich in relics had been conspicuously honoured by Popes in the granting of indulgences.

If it was Frederick's first and kingliest ambition to see the loaf on every peasant's table, it was his second to behold his Saxony occupying a place of honour in the Fatherland in respect of knowledge and truth. From the opening years of the fifteenth century, Universities had been springing up in Germany. Leipzig, Rostock, Freiburg, Greifswalde, Basel, Tübingen, and other seats of the higher culture, had announced that the great Teutonic kindred was about to contest with the Latin peoples the leadership of intellectual civilisation. Before setting out on his pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre in 1493, Frederick had given hints of his intention to found a University. But it was not until the sixteenth century had begun that he took steps towards the realisation of this ambition.

Among his principal advisers on the occasion were Martin Pollich, his physician in attendance, and Luther's friend and monastic superior, Staupitz. Pollich, a far-shining figure, eminent in science, eminent in theology, a veritable light of the world, as his contemporaries fondly called him, took up the idea of the University with enthusiasm. To him it seems to have been mainly due that Wittenberg was chosen as its seat. When that town was first suggested, Frederick answered dubiously. True, he occasionally resided there, but it was an insignificant place, with mean houses, clay-walled, straw-thatched, and it had neither art nor

manufactures. Nor did rugged beauty of landscape compensate for the poorness of the soil. The climate also was ungenial, flaws of wind and gusty rain visiting the town from the Elbe, which at rare intervals flooded its streets. But Pollich persisted, and Frederick gave way. It was decided that in this unpromising region the new University should be set up. Accordingly, in the early years of the sixteenth century Frederick had the satisfaction of seeing his University established in grey Wittenberg by the shivering Elbe, to be a Pharos tower and centre of spiritual illumination for the north of Germany.

The essential condition of success in founding a University was to fill its Chairs with qualified professors. We have no particular account of the occurrence, but it seems to have been in the first half of 1508 that Staupitz mentioned to Frederick that Martin Luther was likely to do credit to the new institution. Frederick gave assent, and Staupitz took his measures accordingly.

Martin had in the meantime been advancing decisively in the new path which had opened before him. We are to conceive his views of the Gospel of grace deepening and strengthening with the lapse of time. He has been pushing on in his theological studies with impassioned earnestness, and searching the Scriptures as for hidden treasure. We may figure him as bringing out his opinions in conversation, startling with his colloquial lightnings honest monks whose brains were still enveloped in mediæval fog, and amazing innocent mortals by his fiery insistence on the deadness of dead works. His genius

had been making itself felt. The University people, keenly alive to the honour of Erfurth, had formed the wish that he should remain in their town, and eventually take his place in the galaxy of their professorial lights. When there was a whisper of his departure, indications did not fail that the academical authorities grudged him to Wittenberg. Staupitz, however, was not only his dear friend and spiritual father, but his superior in the convent, and could, within reasonable limits, command as well as entreat. Martin was an obedient monk. He did not hesitate, therefore, to take Staupitz's advice and accept the offer of Frederick. The office assigned him was that of lecturer in philosophy; and he took up his abode in the Augustine Convent of Wittenberg.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST NOTE OF PROTESTANTISM.

THERE is pathos in the thought that the boy who had "run about the braes" of picturesque Mansfeld, and played in the flowery dells by Eisenach, should be stationed for life in unromantic Wittenberg. Jürgens, however, has something to urge in behalf of the place, or at least of the surrounding country. Luther, he reminds us, was a sturdy pedestrian, and would not find it intolerable to walk some little way before reaching sylvan pleasantness. About a couple of miles from the Elster gate, one comes upon what, in a region of sandy flats, might deserve the name of hill. It rises beside the Elbe. On its left, in Luther's time, were shaggy woods; its right face afforded a view of the town; and in a quiet spot at its foot, a well of crystal-clear water gave birth to a baby rivulet. Thither, many a time and oft, he was to wander in the coming years. He had the well enclosed, and a rustic hut or summer-house reared beside it, where he loved to read, write, or talk with a friend. The spot retains the name of Luther's Well.

But this did not suffice to awake enthusiasm, or to inspire any such affection as he felt for his dear Eisenach. He never liked Wittenberg. Nor did he

take to the townsfolk. He thought them cold and coarse, not alert or warm in the entertaining of strangers, and caring little for culture. The town, however, was admirably central for the German-speaking races, with brisk Berlin a day or two's journey to the north, and Torgau, one of the chief residences of the Saxon Electors, handy towards the south, Dresden on the same river somewhat nearer its source, and Leipzig, Halle, Erfurth, and the whole cluster of Thuringian towns, not far off.

March the seventeenth, 1509, is a light-point in the biography of Luther. Hitherto, though there has been no doubt or difficulty as to the central facts of his life, the filling in has been largely conjectural. His letter to Braun of Eisenach, inviting him to witness the ceremony of priestly ordination, was valuable, indeed, for its date, but in itself formal and colourless. Now, however, we have a Wittenberg letter, also to Braun, and it contains an expression which all the biographers of Luther have felt to be unmistakable as a note of personal identity. A great part of the letter is occupied by apologies, somewhat elaborately polite, for having left Erfurth without seeing or writing to Braun. His departure, it seems, had taken place—the cause we know not—in hot haste. Having finished his excuses, "Here then," he goes on, "I am, by the command or the permission of God, in Wittenberg. If you want to know my state, I am, by God's grace, doing well, only that the work is hard, and chiefly in philosophy, which I should, with all my heart, exchange for theology—that theology, mind

you, which is the kernel of the nut, the core of the wheat, the marrow of the bones."

In these last words history, for the first time, hears the distinctive voice of Martin Luther. In these words we may, without rhetorical exaggeration, read the first manifesto of the Reformation. To this day no better definition can be given of the theology of sound and staunch Protestants than that which puts aside all that is false, all that is extrinsic, and pierces to the kernel of the nut, the core of the wheat, and the marrow of the bones.

Frederick the Wise, at the date of this letter, had already, for some seven years, been nursing his University. But his success had not been dazzling. Staupitz, who was one of the theological professors, though cultivated, experienced, and devout, was moderate in all his ways, unexcited and unexciting, calculated, one can well understand, to shine in colloquy and to influence individual minds, but not to act electrically upon students. Pollich, light of the world, was the first Rector. His ostentatious sympathy with Humanist learning, his bold hitting at scholastic over-refinements, his ingratiating treatment of young men, made him popular; but the numbers that he attracted to Wittenberg were hardly commensurate with what one might expect from such a luminary. Trutvetter was one of the professors. His fame, as a dialectician and teacher of scholasticism in its most enlightened forms, was established; and Frederick, doubtless, congratulated himself that he had been prevailed upon

to leave Erfurth and ray forth wisdom from the banks of the Elbe. All this ought surely to have produced an immense impression upon Germany, and brought undergraduates trooping to the new focus of illumination; but it did not. The number of students at the University the year before Luther betook himself to Wittenberg was less than 200.*

Consistently with the arrangements of the University, it was necessary for Luther, though already a Master of Arts of Erfurth, and an ordained priest of the Church, to enter upon a regular course of study, with a view to obtaining in due form the position of a professor at Wittenberg. The first stage to be traversed ended in his attaining the degree of Bachelor in Biblical knowledge. This distinction he achieved in the same month in which he wrote to Braun. Then followed a period, extending over several terms, during which he continued his studies in the scholastic system. There is evidence, though the matter is obscure and is not worth investigating, that in the course of the year 1509 he returned provisionally to Erfurth, and remained there for some considerable time before finally settling in Wittenberg. The library of the Erfurth University may have been a main attraction, the literature that grouped itself about the great scholastic writers being immense. It is certain that both before and for some time after this date he devoted the closest attention to the scholastic philosophy. He did so, we may be perfectly sure, without losing sight of that

* Köstlin's larger work.

inner truth which was for him the kernel of the nut; and in subsequent years he applied language of violent condemnation to the teaching of the Schoolmen generally. But he spoke in those coming years with equal reprobation of the monastic system, in which he now contentedly took part; and there is no reason to believe that there was an absence of sympathetic intelligence, or a presence of sharp repugnance, in his mind, when he was giving the flower of his days and nights to converse with the great scholastic doctors. He could not have attacked them wisely unless he had first known them well.

Will the modern reader make bold to look over the shoulder of Martin Luther, as he sits in his cell conning the immense tomes of the Schoolmen? His proximate object is to claim University recognition as an expert in the system of Peter Lombard, the renowned master of The Sentences. Modern readers have not the remotest idea what a stupendous personage this Peter of The Sentences once was. In the vast collection of patristic and mediæval theology bearing the name of M. Migne,* Peter has a big volume almost entirely to himself. "Certain it is," says M. Migne, "that every one who has the minutest particle of acquaintance with theology has heard of Lombard." It was the twelfth century that first enjoyed the shining of his genius; and for three or four centuries afterwards his lustre continued substantially unimpaired. Born in Lombardy early in the century, he rose, through

* *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus.*

his superlative qualities, to distinction, and became Bishop of Paris. Besides many other works, he left behind him a view of Christian truth, systematised according to the principles alike of philosophy and theology, under the title of *Quatuor Libri Sententiarum*, Four Books of Sentences. It was familiarly known as The Sentences. Century after century it remained the chief manual of philosophy and theology in the Universities of Europe. The most acute and learned doctors were content to be its expounders and commentators. Lombard's method is that of analysis, carried out with exhaustive completeness, and issuing in one comprehensive synthesis of Divine and human verity. The analysis is carried on by a succession of Distinctions, the true in each instance being distinguished from the untrue. In the first Book there are forty-eight Distinctions; in the second forty-four; in the third, forty; in the fourth, fifty-four: one hundred and eighty-six in all: and of course there may be any number of minor Distinctions under these main divisions. The masterliness of Lombard's arrangement may be held to be attested by the enormous influence it exerted upon his great successor, Thomas Aquinas, and has continued to exert upon theological speculation down to the present time. But what will probably be of most interest to moderns is the explanation the book affords of one main impression respecting the Schoolmen and their argumentation which has held possession of the mind of the world. At this hour, in platform speech and leading article, one meets

with allusions to the wire-drawn distinctions and hair-splittings of the Schoolmen. No one who knows even so much of Scholasticism as appears in the skeleton outline of Lombard's work just given, can fail to understand why the distinctions of the scholastic philosophy impressed the imagination of mankind, and why, after they had ceased to be subjects of reverence, they became matters of scorn. As for Luther, the more firmly he got his grasp upon the kernel, and core, and marrow, of which we heard, and the more his innate practicality and love of concrete fact rebelled against superfine theorising, the more impatient did he become of the distinctions of Scholasticism. In his mature manhood his mood became that of angry scorn, and he too impatiently swept away the tissue of Scholasticism, as a mere reticulation of cobweb—a network of *distinctiunculæ*—obscuring the features of truth, the facts of Scripture.

Peter of Lombardy, one may infer from a passage in the Table Talk, was held by Luther to be the most solidly able of the Schoolmen; but in these initial years of his Wittenberg sojourn he must have searchingly and systematically studied also the works of Thomas Aquinas. Many a word of fierce disdain may be found in the letters and treatises of Luther, applied to the Thomist sect; but he maintained that the disciples did injustice to the master; and, though it was not until the calm, or comparatively calm, afternoon of his life that he spoke with anything like kindness of Thomas himself, he would at no time have admitted

that, rightly understood, the theology of the Angelic Doctor was at variance with his own. None the less may an intelligent and open-hearted Protestant hold that one of the questionable effects of the Reformation was to bar out half Christendom from the influence of that gentle, bright, and great spirit. The style of Aquinas is characteristic of him—clear, simple, beautiful, with a kind of liquid transparence, reminding one, somehow, of the trilling of a nightingale. If a nightingale could sing in Latin, it would sing in the Latin of Aquinas. His character, as depicted by the most spiritual of Church historians, Neander, was a type of moral elevation and the purest spiritual ambition. His purpose was to display Christian truth in its universality, as embracing all that had been attained to by the great thinkers of antiquity, and thus to make Plato and Aristotle, as well as St. Paul and St. John, pillars in that temple of which Christ was the corner-stone.

Some readers may be exceedingly surprised to hear, but it cannot be reasonably denied, that neither the Master of Sentences nor the Angelic Doctor can be truly affirmed to attach less than infinite importance to the grace of God, or to the righteousness that is by faith in Christ. At the end of Lombard's great work, in Migne's edition, there are printed a few Articles to denote the views held distinctively by the Master of Sentences, and not adopted by the Schoolmen generally. One of these is to the effect that the essential virtue in a saved soul—his love towards God and his neighbour—is not a created thing, but is the Holy Spirit in actual

presence. This sounds more like an utterance of Taulerian mysticism than a voice from the schools; but it may well excite wonder that its singularly close affinity to some of those expressions of doctrine in which Luther did his best to intensify the assertion of an indwelling Spirit, and of a passively received, a wholly Divine righteousness, in the soul that is created anew by grace, has escaped notice. Luther expressly acknowledged his debt to Tauler; and betrays no consciousness of having derived from Lombard any hint that the saved soul has become the habitation of God: but his mind was saturated with The Sentences, and the springs and roots of thought may be influenced although consciousness of the fact is not vivid at the moment, and though memory retains no record of the impression. It is at all events inconceivable that, holding the tenet just described, Lombard could take any but a strongly evangelical view of salvation. Accordingly we find that, in his Commentary on the Romans, he is as explicit as words can make him in pointing out that salvation is by grace and faith, not by dead works. Sinners "are justified freely, that is without preceding merits . . . . not by the law . . . . but by the grace of Christ."* "The righteousness of God," he says, "is without law."† He quotes from Augustine what was with Luther too a favourite adage, "Fides impetrat quod lex imperat." The English, as so often happens, cannot

* *Justificati sunt gratis, id est sine meritis præcedentibus . . . . non per legem . . . . per gratiam Christi.*

† *Justitia Dei sine lege est.*

render here the antithetic parallelism so exquisitely as the Latin. But the meaning is clear—that faith obtains from God the power to do what law, in God's name, commands.

The reader's surprises are not yet at an end. Candour compels the admission that, so far as my imperfect investigation can be trusted, those great Schoolmen did *not* set small store by Holy Writ. The whole tone and tenor of the works both of the Angelic Doctor and of Lombard conveys to my mind the idea of loyal and unreserved submission to inspired authority.

What, then, are we to say of Luther's rebellion against the Schoolmen, and his vehement repudiation of them and their system? The question might be answered at great length, but the essential point is to make frank admission that, in the heat of conflict, he did less than justice to those men. The dust of battle veiled the past of Church history to the Reformers, and that veil has been but partially rent until this day. British Protestants in particular are scandalously apt to crumple up a thousand years of Christian Church history in blind, harsh, and lazy contempt.

But Luther did not beat the air. The cause of the Schoolmen had in his time unquestionably become the cause of multitudinous abuses. The system buttressed by their authority sheltered a sacerdotalism which his soul abhorred, obscured a truth which he regarded as the vital germ of spiritual life, and diverted the attention of mankind from the Word of God. The scholastic system had muffled up the drums in God's battle, so that

they gave an uncertain sound. It may, indeed, be objected—not without plausibility—that, for Luther, Christianity consisted in an iteration, with monotonous intensity, of the one doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. This exposed him to the satiric shaft of Heine in our own time. Heine pretends to have learned from Swedenborg that the latter, on his visit to heaven, found Luther, three hundred years after his death, bringing up every morning exactly the same mouldy arguments by which he had enforced his one doctrine. But Luther had, through this doctrine, emerged from intolerable anguish into peace and joy. To his eye, once opened, this doctrine seemed to blaze from St. Paul's epistles, and indeed from the whole of Scripture. His passionate appeal was that popes, priests, and commentators should stand aside, and let that light be seen. If he was disposed to make a bonfire of the immense mass of scholastic literature, he expressly avowed his willingness to have his own commentaries and books in general flung also upon the pile and consumed out of hand, if only men could thereby be induced to read the Bible.

CHAPTER IV.

LUTHER IN ROME.

LUTHER'S journey to Rome naturally excites the imagination alike of Protestant and Papist. It exerted a powerful influence upon him; and in the latter part of his life he spoke of it as having played an important part in fitting him for his main work as a Reformer. But it is difficult to write of it with scientific precision. Of contemporary information respecting it there is absolutely none. That he went to Rome has never been called in question, but for at least ten years after his return he observes a complete silence as to the trip. In his letters of those years he never mentions his having been in Rome. In his conferences with Cardinal Cajetan, in his disputations with Dr. Eck, in his letters to Pope Leo—nay, in his tremendous broadside of invective and accusation against all things Romish in his Address to the German Nation and Nobility—there occurs not one unmistakable reference to his having been in Rome.

It was long afterwards—when the whole world had undergone, for him, a change—when he saw the city of the popes through an atmosphere inflamed with indignation, when he firmly believed that Rome was

Babylon, the seat of Anti-Christ, and that it was his duty before God to warn all men to come out of her and escape being made partakers of her plagues—that he made those statements on which is based our knowledge of his visit to Rome. He was a truthful man, but he had a lively imagination, and was greatly influenced by his emotions. A few main facts as to his experiences in Rome, and the impressions made upon his mind, we may accept, but beyond this we cannot be confident. By every rule of evidence we are bound to hold that, when the most furious assailant Rome ever knew described, from a distance of ten years or upwards, the incidents of a journey through Italy to Rome, the few touches of light in his picture are more trustworthy than its black breadths of shade.

He was not sure of the year of the journey. His idea was that he went in 1510; Köstlin is probably right in thinking that the year was 1511. What, specifically, was his errand, none can tell. He was sent on convent business, but its particular nature can only be conjectured. He carried with him gold pieces, to fee an advocate in Rome. There is no reason to doubt that he brought the matter to a successful issue; and he expressed approbation of the treatment he had met with in the Roman Courts. Pope Julius II. then held the papal reins, and his hand was firm. Luther at all times passionately loved order, and he acknowledged that the municipal administration of Julius was exemplary.

Augustinian monks usually travelled in pairs, and

he was accompanied to Italy by a brother of his Order. They went on foot, and may be supposed to have been six or eight weeks on the road, first in going, and then in returning. Their route lay by Munich, and Luther retained during life a happy recollection of the populations among whom they came. "Were I to travel much," he said, "I should go nowhere more gladly than to Schwabenland and Baiern. The people are friendly and obliging. They give you glad welcome, and are frank in their advances to strangers. You get money's worth, too, for your money."

Coming from the sandy flats around Wittenberg, he was charmed with lustrous Italy. The charitable institutions excited his warm admiration; the hospitals, too, with delicate ladies ministering to the sick. The richness of the fare in the Italian convents struck him with the contrast it presented to the hard fare of the German Orders. A few words which he let fall, on one occasion, in that Latin to which he could give a keen ironical edge at pleasure, struck the fine gentlemen who wore the cowl in Italy as an ungracious response to their lavish hospitality, and he ran some risk of violence from their resentment. The olive trees on the hillsides, rooted in soil formed by the crumbling rock, touched his imagination. "It was then," he said in other years, "that I understood the words of the seventy-eighth Psalm: 'He gave them to drink in the desert with water from the rock.'" The costume of the peasantry pleased him, the Italian sense of colour and comeliness being a kind of revelation to

his German eye. It was in no morosely critical mood that he traversed the world-famous plain in which the Po bears to the sea the tribute waters of the Alps on this hand, and of the Apennines on that. And when at length, upon the clear horizon, the towers of Rome rose into view, he fell to the ground, and in accents of reverential ecstasy hailed the sacred City.

The traditional conception of Rome which for more than a thousand years had reigned in devout Christendom had not yet been shaken from the mind of Luther. At no time in his life did he forget that the city was consecrated by the blood of saints and martyrs; but as yet he had entered upon none of those studies by which his appreciation of the historical claims of Rome to the veneration and gratitude of Christendom was rudely shaken. He had not divested himself of the vague feeling that Rome was, for Christians, what Jerusalem had been for Jews.

When he entered at the Porta del Popolo he was in a transport of reverent expectation. Hastening into a little church that stood by the way, he solemnised the occasion by reading a mass. He ran from shrine to shrine, athirst for blessing. The thought occurred to him—"Oh, that my father and mother were already dead, that I, by my prayers and masses in the Christian Jerusalem, might free them from purgatory and land them in heaven!" No legend was too startling for his acceptance; and the odour of sanctity did not repel him from the dingiest heap of hermits' wrappages or martyrs'

bones.* He was, in fact, intoxicated with pious superstition, or superstitious piety. Measureless was the contempt with which he one day looked back upon the transports of the period.

But the true Luther was still here. Amid his excitement he was haunted, more or less, with a sense of unreality. That theology of kernel, core, and marrow had not "gone dead" in his soul. The half-conscious feeling that all this was in the nature of a lapse from light, a falling back into that region of spiritual dusk and moonshine out of which, by the aid of God and of Staupitz, and of the Bible, he had emerged, stirred in the depths of his heart. Once, when he was climbing painfully on his knees up the twenty-eight steps of the so-called judgment-seat of Pilate, to win treasure of indulgence by the act, the suppressed consciousness flashed into vivid clearness. Like a lance-point of keenest light penetrating to his very soul came the sentence from his half-forgotten Bible, "The just shall live by faith." Who has not experienced the power of such sudden inspirations? "You, Martin!" said this revealing flash from the Spirit in the Bible to the spirit of Luther, "have you turned again to the weak and beggarly elements from which you were emancipated?" The sting of the Bible words remained in his heart for ever.

Gradually there came other disenchanting influences, to fret his dream with streaks of morning grey. Truth,

* Zuschrift an den Ritter Hans von Sternberg zu einer Erklärung des 117 Psalm; Luther, 1530.

reality, common sense, asserted their power. He began also to make discoveries. The religion of Roman ecclesiastics consisted mainly of ritualistic performances, show rather than substance, and they held sincere devoutness to be the mark of a fool. They had no patience with the deliberate, awe-struck reverence with which he read mass. "Be done, you heavy block-head," they would say, "and let our Lady have her Son again." Many a whisper, many a titter, passed the open secret from ear to ear that not a few of the priests of Rome were too clever to believe in the miracle of transubstantiation. "Bread thou art, and bread thou wilt remain; wine thou art, and wine thou wilt continue to be," said those lively ecclesiastics, when engaged in consecrating the elements.

It did not tend to enlarge Martin's charity towards the priests of Rome that they looked with a disdain which they took no great pains to conceal on his beloved Germany. He was able, however, to reciprocate their scorn, for he perceived them to be superficial, unweighing, uninformed fellows, without theological learning, his inferiors even in handling the Latin language.

Making due allowance for the influence of those years when Luther thought it his duty to be angry with everything Roman, we cannot refuse to believe that he had glimpses of a ghastly state of morals existing in Rome. Behind the immense parade of externalised and ritualistic devotion—below the whited sepulchres of monasticism and celibacy — he was dimly aware of a haggard and horrible region of

unmentionable depravity. In his afternoon of life no words seemed to him too strong to describe the iniquities lurking in the very shadow of Pontifical holiness.

It was not solely, however, in the Christian and ecclesiastical city that he took an interest. The ruins of Pagan Rome, the silent grandeur of the Colosseum, the Baths of Diocletian, were for him pathetically eloquent. How strangely—he mused—as in the pageant of a vision, had that ancient Rome, so majestic in its pride, so mighty in its strength, with the world for a pedestal, passed away and yet remained, melting into the new Rome that claimed to sway mankind in the name of Heaven! The city of the Cæsars had become the city of the Popes; the Olympian circles of the Pantheon were the ceilings of a Christian church. Luther felt the wonderfulness of the whole matter—a wonderfulness to strike one dumb.

Apart from question either of the prevalence of scepticism or of the prevalence of immorality in the Rome visited by Luther about 1511, we have enough in his experience and observation to reinforce the general Protestant position that thorough-going reform was wanted. On the face of it, the New Jerusalem of the Papacy was a city sunk in superstition—a city in which religion presented itself not as the sublimation of ethical rightness into Divine piety, not as the elevation of morals into holiness, not as the consecration of life by Christ-like affections, not as a doctrine of salvation for the soul by uniting it in fellowship with God, but

as the observance of innumerable ceremonies, the performance of ritualistic ordinances, the gathering up of remission of sins from countless shrines and relic-hoards. Such a New Jerusalem would have been unrecognised by St. Paul, St. John, and St. Peter, unowned by their Master. Such a New Jerusalem was being fast left behind by Europe in the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Gospel of Christ, as Luther found it in the city of the Popes, consisted of an infinite availability of indulgences, an infinite adoration of saints and relics, an infinite singing or saying of masses. What he saw—state it, if you will, in algebraic coldness and accuracy—furnished overwhelming proof that reform had become a clamant need, an inexorable necessity.

CHAPTER V.

DOCTOR LUTHER.

At home again in Wittenberg, he continued to live in trust, intimacy, and affection with Staupitz, the current of their friendship ruffled by no breeze of disagreement. We may believe that it was at the initiative of Luther that Staupitz directed the Bible to be daily read in the convents under his Vicarial surveillance. In Luther's convent, St. Augustine had been read hitherto, but the Scriptures were now substituted, with Martin himself for reader.

It is certain that it was with Staupitz and not with Luther that the idea originated of his claiming the highest honour in the bestowal of the University, the degree of Doctor in Theology. It is one of the differentiating traits in his character that, while his self-reliance was in the superlative degree, his self-satisfaction was exceptionally, perhaps morbidly, small. He refused to own his right to distinction or dignity, and shrank from the responsibility which the new honour might bring with it. Staupitz found, therefore, that he had a serious resistance to overcome. We hear of discussions of his proposal, conducted by the friends as they sat under a pear tree in the convent garden. Luther,

who seems to have been in a nerveless and dejected mood, pleaded his feeble health and the probability of his dying soon, but Staupitz waived this objection aside with the semi-jocular remark that, if he were worked to death on earth, work might perhaps be found for him to do in heaven. The upshot was that he yielded to the arguments of his friend and monastic superior.

One thing still stood in the way. Luther, utterly poor, had not wherewithal to pay the fees indispensable to his being clothed in the Doctorial dignity. But this difficulty too was surmounted, and that in a pleasing way. Staupitz announced that the Elector would lay down the fifty Rhenish gulden necessary to defray all costs. It is the first time we hear of Luther coming under personal obligation to Frederick.

No one who has any knowledge of human nature will think it an impeachment of his sincerity in offering resistance to Staupitz's importunity that, having once consented to take his Doctor's degree, he addressed himself to the business with zeal and animation. He wrote to the Prior, Master, and Seniors of his Erfurth Convent, announcing the day of his investiture and inviting them to be present. The celebration took place in October, 1512. Luther held a public disputation in theology. There were the usual festive demonstrations; ringing of bells, marching of processions, speaking of speeches. In all University towns these things are of immense interest. Luther was profoundly impressed by his experiences. Remembering, long afterwards, what he had felt, he said, as has already been noticed,

that his conception of the quintessence of earthly bliss centred in the feelings of a young man who went triumphing, amid academical on-lookers, on such an occasion. He knew that many who had long known him, many whom he loved and honoured, had their eyes upon him. Staupitz was there, for certain, with joy in his loving face. Spalatin would not be far away. And though no mention is made of the fact, we may be permitted to think that John Luther and Margaret had made their way to Wittenberg. His investiture, moreover, possessed for him a significance very different from what commonly attaches to pageants and ceremonial formalities. He regarded it as a kind of lay consecration—as a solemn engagement that he would dedicate the powers of his intellect—that is to say, specifically, of his truth-discerning, knowledge-acquiring faculty—to the service of his God and his race. At the time when he entered upon the office of priest he had not yet awakened to the true life of his spirit. He had probably now begun to be dubious and uneasy as to the awful powers then assumed by him. The conviction was mastering the strongholds of his mind that Christianity is not a sacerdotal religion, that the priest, as such, has no divine right of precedence over the layman. He looked upon and valued his Doctor's degree as a token of admission to the lay ministry of the Gospel, a ministry which laid no claim to priestly powers, and was trammelled by no priestly restrictions. Never, after coming to Wittenberg, did he call himself a priest; and throughout life the title

he liked best was that of Doctor. His countrymen and the world in general have caught the word from his lips. It is Doctor Luther, not monk Luther or priest Luther, who stands forward to the imagination of mankind as the foe of sacerdotal unrealities, the sturdy maintainer of truth, the reformer of the Church on principles of solid learning, common sense, and unsuperstitious piety.

CHAPTER VI.

A BRAVE WORD FOR REUCHLIN.

The truth-seeking, truth-speaking, and truth-defending zeal to which Luther felt himself pledged as Doctor in Theology was not likely to pine for want of exercise. He soon found himself called upon to take part in the conflict which had for many years been going on between knowledge and obscurantism, between reviving letters and doggedly-resistent mediævalism.

John Reuchlin was one of the most distinguished representatives of critical erudition at that time in Europe. Born about the middle of the fifteenth century, he reached the maturity of his powers when the intellectual dawn was beginning to extend its illumination from Italy to Germany. Having at an early age won distinction as a Greek and Latin scholar, he struck out a path for himself by entering upon the study of Hebrew.

At the time Luther became a Doctor of Theology, Reuchlin, who had now attained to years when rest and silence were sweet, had been drawn into contentious trouble by a crew of pedants, bigots, and persecutors. Conspicuous among these towered Hoogstraten, Grand Inquisitor for the Rhineland, whose duty it was to take care that the fragrant breezes of Cologne should

waft no breath of heresy. Of the allies of this defender of the faith none was more busy than one Pfefferkorn, born a Jew, baptised a Christian, and ingenious in the devising of vexations both for Christians and Jews. It had occurred to these preposterous persons that benefit would result to mankind if the Jews were forced to submit their books to Christian inspection, with a view to the burning of all those that contained insults to Hoogstraten's native, and Pfefferkorn's adopted, creed. They had prevailed upon Kaiser Maximilian to grant them an edict for the execution of their project. But its execution naturally occasioned remonstrance, and Maximilian, a well-meaning but weak man, found himself at a loss as to how he ought to regulate the matter. For counsel he applied to Reuchlin, the acknowledged head of Hebrew scholarship, and unimpeached on the ground of orthodoxy. Reuchlin, peaceably entrenched amid his books and manuscripts, replied that the Jewish books, if let alone, would do more service to Christian people by the help they rendered to Hebrew scholarship than could be procured from their destruction. Hereupon the hornet-swarm of fanatical wiseacres flew at the ingenuous scholar. He was a patron of the worst heretics. What doom could be too severe for him?

Thus it came about that, during eight or ten years of the first quarter of the sixteenth century the name of Reuchlin was painted on the banners of the advanced party in Germany. Him Ulrich von Hutten lauded in verse and prose. Him all the heavy-footed, slow-brained

children of respectable dulness cordially detested. Every man of note enough to be a conspicuous object in the world of theology or of letters was expected to declare publicly for or against Reuchlin.

Under these circumstances our good Spalatin was not likely to forget Doctor Luther. He applied to him for a written opinion on the Reuchlin controversy, and Luther wrote a letter upon the subject. Reuchlin's opponents had gone so far as to accuse him expressly of heresy, and to proceed against him in the way customary with the Inquisition. It was, therefore, with reference to a legal case, in course of being tried, that Luther wrote.

His letter evinces, in the outset, a nice appreciation of this circumstance. He is not, he says, in the position of a judge whose mind is in equipoise between the parties at his bar. His heart is with "the innocent and most learned John Reuchlin," whom he holds "in great esteem and affection." That is to say, he is confessedly biassed. Nevertheless, his decision may, he says, be taken for what it is worth; and it is to the distinct effect that Reuchlin's decision on the Hebrew books of the Jews did not contain aught dangerous or heretical. He calls attention, in a tone of strong contempt, to the absurdity of the Cologne faction — turning garter ties into Gordian knots—overlooking the immensely important fact that Reuchlin, in complying with Maximilian's request for advice, had solemnly protested that he uttered no article of faith, and had expressly confined himself to the statement of

what deserved consideration as a matter of opinion. With great sagacity and clearness Luther insists upon the importance of the distinction to which he alludes. The very life of the soul, in so far as that depends on freedom to inquire into truth, will, he urges, be stifled, if the candid bringing of matters to discussion—the frank statement of arguments on this side and that—is to be made criminal. If the right of disputation is lost, all, he says, is lost, and the most orthodox of scholars may tremble before the inquisitor.

Then he breaks into impassioned rebuke of the officious folly that hunts up offences among the Jews while Christians have so much to look to at their own doors! "What shall I say but that these absurd personages go about to cast out Beelzebub, and *not* with the finger of God? How can I sufficiently bewail the folly of us Christians in being wise abroad and unwise at home? In all the courts of this Christian Jerusalem of ours a hundred blasphemies, worse than those of the Jews, go flaunting, and every niche has its spiritual idol. Be these, with supreme earnestness of endeavour—these foes in the citadel—removed! But no. We leave them in peaceful triumph, and turn aside to things external and afar, neglecting, under suasion of Diabolus, our own concerns, and *not* mending the manners of our neighbours."

This is noteworthy for the vivid consciousness it betrays of the idolatry of Christendom. Luther thus *possibly* attests a special impetus in the Anti-Popish direction, as derived from his visit to Rome. Some

authorities of eminence have thought that this Reuchlin letter was written immediately after his return from Italy. But the balance of evidence is in favour of the hypothesis that the letter was not written for at least two years after he saw Rome, and, in that case, the "Jerusalem" here mentioned may have no application more precise than Christian Europe in general. What admits of no dispute is, that at the time of writing this letter he had passed out of that earliest stage of his spiritual experience when he lived in trance-like contentment, and had become aware of evils, malignant and of great power, which every Christian with the courage of his principles was called upon to abate. The clangorous words — *Centuplum pejores sunt blasphemiæ per omnes plateas Jerusalem, et omnia spiritualibus idolis plena*—sound like a trumpet-blast.

This letter * therefore is one of great historical importance. It blends, in one strong utterance, condemnation of the Roman system and acceptance of critical learning and progressive intelligence. It announces the alliance between revived letters and reviving faith, and pleads the cause of one who stood out before his contemporaries as the champion of common sense against prejudice, and of keen-eyed learning, interrogating the oracles of inspiration, against Scholasticism, nodding on its dogmatic throne based on the letter of the Vulgate.

* De Wette, 3.

CHAPTER VII.

A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN.

Except this somewhat dubiously dated letter in defence of Reuchlin, we have no letter from his pen for about two years. There then occurs the letter he wrote to the Prior and other authorities of the convent to which he had belonged in Erfurth; and this must not be passed over without a word. There had, it appears, been not a little strong feeling in Erfurth in connection with his departure for Wittenberg. One John Nathin, monk, an alumnus, presumably of Erfurth University, had made a loud pamphleteering fuss about Luther's having taken his promotion to the Doctor's degree at Wittenberg instead of Erfurth, accusing him of nothing short of perjury. Luther clears himself of the charge, giving us, at the same time, the information that it was at Erfurth, not Wittenberg, that he earned the distinction of mastership in The Sentences of Lombard.

Nathin and his noise would have been infinitely unimportant but for two circumstances, which admit happily of being stated with brevity. The first is that the affair proves Luther to have at this time —1514—become a man of note in the University

world of Germany. It is only about men of mark that rival seats of learning contend. Erfurth unmistakably grudged Wittenberg the credit of possessing Martin. The second, and far more gravely important, circumstance is that the Nathin letter contains one short but highly significant passage. On it, as on a beam of miraculous light, we are carried into the very cell, into the very heart, of Luther. He is in the ardours of his new spiritual life. Its joy is still fresh to him, and, like a happy child, he makes all men his confidants as to how happy he is. "But all these things," he says, breaking suddenly away from the trivialities he has been talking of, "are of no moment, for I am perfectly quiet and in reconcilement with you all, whatever the offence that may have been done me. So marvellously has God shed His blessing upon my unworthy self that I have cause only for gladness and affection and works of charity. Me it becomes to do good to those who have merited ill at my hands, for I, having deserved ill at the Lord's hands, have received good. Therefore I pray you be content, and lay aside all bitterness, if any there be, on the subject of my transference to Wittenberg, for so the Lord, who cannot be resisted, has willed. Farewell in the Lord." * Simple words! Their naïve sincerity and artlessness indicate much. They attest an extreme joyfulness of soul. Luther was in possession of Christ's specific legacy to spirits like Himself, peace. It is hardly a metaphor to say that he was in heaven. This is the

* De Wette, 6.

verification, in so far as the individual soul is concerned, which the Christian offers to the man of science. He may challenge the philosophical hedonist, with all his apparatus of happiness, to point the way to a joy that is either more intense or more healthful. Luther feels his whole nature in such an element of joy that no angry passion can strike a discord into its music, no cloud stain its radiance.

CHAPTER VIII.

BECOMING A POWER.

The year 1515 was without question one of the most important in Luther's spiritual history, but it is for us a blank, except in so far as it can be imaginatively filled in. We know the paths he traversed, ever onwards and upwards; but some envious wind—heaping drift of sand or dead leaves—has obliterated his footsteps. We know that he thought and studied. We know that he read his Bible, entering with profound sympathy into the meaning of St. Paul, and bathing his spirit, with ever deepening sense of sweetness and refreshment, in those wells of sacred song dug for pilgrims in the world's wilderness by the Psalmists of Israel.

When again we meet him he has become more hostile than before to all authority that contests the supremacy of Holy Writ. Early in February, 1516, he writes to Lange of Erfurth, and his letter is a hot indictment against the Schoolmen, and their Magnus Apollo—Aristotle. He expresses himself on the latter with a fierce vindictiveness that seems at first glance strangely out of place, when applied to that steady-tempered regent of the continents of thought. Luther was fully aware, indeed, that his sentiments would be

deemed blasphemous by the obdurate votaries of the past—those, to use his own words, "who have resolved to observe not a five years' silence with the Pythagoreans, but a whole eternity of silence with the dead, to believe everything, to hear meekly at all times, and never to wave a wing or raise a murmur against Aristotle." Passionate in his fury, he calls Aristotle the most calumnious of calumniators, who fastens such absurd beliefs upon his opponents that an ass or a stone might cry out against them.

It will now be universally admitted that Luther did injustice to Aristotle, being prepossessed against him on account of the service which, without fault of his, he had rendered to Church theology. The Schoolmen had not asked his leave when they pressed him into their service, and laid upon his Atlantean shoulders the weight of their whole dogmatic system. No one now doubts that Aristotle was a genuine truth-seeker, and that he did really make a notable contribution to the treasuries of knowledge. Nevertheless, it is an unquestionable fact that Luther, in his onslaught on Aristotle, was a true representative, not only of the reforming party in theology, but of the entire movement party of his age. No word that could be named was so widely and authoritatively the symbol of all who stood still, and advocated standing still, in the sixteenth century, as "Aristotle." In philosophy, in science, as well as in the halls of theology, that colossal figure barred progress. In bidding men turn from speculation to the scrutiny of nature, Bacon bade them

rise against Aristotle. In bespeaking a new lease of life for metaphysics, on the plea of wedding metaphysics to fact, Descartes repudiated the authority of Aristotle. The most forward-reaching minds of the sixteenth century concurred *en masse* with Luther in tracing to the influence of Aristotle a thraldom that compelled the living to pay to the dead an eternal homage of acquiescent silence.*

As for Luther's own vehemence against Aristotle, it meant simply that he had come to a final breach with the Schoolmen, and had advanced by long strides in antagonism to the Papacy. Already he was passing Staupitz in his swift march, and becoming without knowing it a leader in the European agitation for spiritual reform. His extraordinary power of personally impressing men had made itself felt. In relation to Staupitz, to Spalatin, and even to Frederick, he had assumed to some extent the attitude of director. It is fine to note how the miner's son, the penniless monk, aided only by heroism of character and force of brain, and the dynamic influence of intense personality, takes rank among the governing personages of his epoch. He honoured and loved Frederick, but in religious matters he already looked upon him much as an affectionate father might upon a well-disposed but backward son. The good Frederick had warm sympathies with reform. The doctrine of grace, lucidly expounded by Staupitz, or fervently preached by Luther, might seem to him at moments the truth of all truths; but could

* *Perpetuo et in eternum cum mortuis silentium tenere.* De Wette, 8.

the traditions of a thousand years be fallacious, could many generations of devout men, earnestly inquiring the way of salvation, have gone astray? Staupitz did not think it his duty to hurry Frederick forward. He could not find it in his heart to tell the prince outright that there was no saving efficacy in relics. Nay, he humoured Frederick so far as to go, in 1516, on a tour to the Netherlands, penetrating to Antwerp, with an eye to the acquisition of new objects to augment the miracle-working hoard. Luther had a far keener and more serious apprehension than Staupitz of Frederick's religious deficiencies. His mediævalism had become, in Luther's eyes, a thing pitiful, a thing dangerous. He told Spalatin in black and white, that though he greatly esteemed Frederick's sagacity in worldly affairs, yet in things pertaining to God and the soul, he regarded him as "wrapped in almost sevenfold blindness." * And Pfeffinger, Frederick's right-hand man in secular concerns, he regarded as, in spiritual things, equally blind.

One is startled to find that Luther could already take it upon him, without, so far as appears, a syllable of remonstrance, to set his heel upon a scheme promoted by Frederick for appointing Staupitz to a bishopric. Representing to Spalatin the frightfully degenerate condition of the episcopal order at the time, he adjured his friend to use his influence to dissuade Frederick from exposing Staupitz to its temptations.

* De Wette, 14.

Think how perilously delicate was the task thus ventured on by Luther. Staupitz does not appear to have had any misgivings as to his own fitness for the episcopal office; and not only Frederick, and Pfeffinger, and Spalatin, but Staupitz's sister, an abbess, liked the idea of his being preferred. To save a man from temptation under such circumstances is one of those services which friendship, however well it may be tested by time, however intimate it may be in sympathy, generally shrinks from performing. Luther, however, persisted, and his touch pulverised the project. His letter to Spalatin* on the subject shows that he already regarded the Episcopate as horribly and incurably corrupt—saturated with avarice and sunk in unnameable vices. Towards these vices there was not, indeed, in Staupitz, the faintest proclivity, and this Luther did not omit to say; but he impetuously urged that it could not be good for Staupitz to be plunged into such an element. There is no reason to believe that Staupitz, gentlest of souls, cherished a particle of grudge against Luther for his interference on this occasion. Nor did Frederick evince the smallest displeasure. The right of the Doctor to speak in the accents of a king, on all occasions when religion was the question, already seemed incontestable. There were many, indeed, who muttered that he was a presumptuous, upsetting man, if not a heretic and a pest. But others—and these the moving and growing party—became more and more convinced that he was such a prophet of God as had not for many years arisen in

* De Wette, 14.

Germany. Pollich, a sincere reformer, but sensible of the difficulties in the way, and considerably disheartened from preceding failures, ventured, after hearing Martin in the pulpit, to express the opinion that *this* one was of the few who succeed, not of the many who fail.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE PULPIT.

He was now in constant exercise of his eminent gifts as a preacher. The Augustinian convent in Wittenberg was being rebuilt, and the first scene of his preaching was a small, tumble-down chapel in the neighbourhood. Here, in a pulpit of old boards, to which pious Germans fondly refer as the cradle of the new Gospel of grace, he lifted up his voice. His early sermons have one interest all their own. They set him before us in that transition stage when he had already adopted the doctrinal theology of the Reformation, but continued to regard the Church in which he had been brought up as his spirit's home. We find him, for example, discoursing upon the celebrated passage on which Popish divines rest the claims of the Papacy to universal authority. "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Luther is silent on the question whether the Pope is or is not the lineal successor of Saint Peter, but attaches great importance to the words of Christ as bearing upon the constitution of the Christian Church. "Had Christ," he says, "not committed all power to man, there would have been no perfect Church, for no

order can exist while every one is at liberty to declare that he has been specially illuminated by the Holy Spirit. In this way have heretics proceeded, as if every one had a right to set up his own peculiar principle, and there should be as many Churches as heads. Therefore He is pleased to exercise no power except by man and as delivered to man, in order that He might gather together all in one. This power He so confirmed that all the powers of earth and hell, rising against it, should not prevail, thus making plain that it is of God and not of men. Those, therefore, who withdraw themselves from this united and ordered power do nothing else but flatteringly deceive themselves in the fancy of illuminations and wondrous works, as our schismatics and crotcheteers (*capitosi*). Better it is to obey just authority than to be the victims of fools, unconscious what mischief they do." *

It is to be noted as a point of importance that Luther is careful not to say that the power of the keys is bestowed upon Peter alone, or given to him in any other sense than to the other disciples and to the Church.

Wherever we dip into these early sermons we find them, with the qualification just indicated, importunately evangelical. The weakness and wickedness of man, the nothingness of human merit, the infinite preciousness and power of Divine grace, are the constant themes. What is his idea of sin? Tracing moral evil upon earth to the fall of Adam, he holds that its

* Loescher.

essence lies in rebellion against God and assertion of self. If we ask whether this root of evil can be further traced, he replies that pride—pride resting on false wisdom—is its germ. "All rebellion is from wisdom of the flesh, which cannot be subject to God." And sin he regards as in all ages radically the same. Adam would officiously improve upon God's arrangements. So the sinner constantly does. He refuses to be saved in God's way, and insists upon his own. This was always a cardinal idea with Luther.

Human nature, he sets forth, no longer exists in its pristine state. The ideal man, as originally constituted, fell in Adam. But—here his view pointedly excludes the *total* depravity of human nature—there exists in every man indestructibly a remnant, *συντήρησις*, of ideal and sinless humanity. This indestructible particle in man has a root in the reason, yearning towards the best things—truth, knowledge, righteousness. It has a root also in the will, in virtue of which a man wills to be saved, to live well and blessedly, to repel and hate perdition. It affords material for "resuscitation and restoration through grace." But without grace the remnant of goodness is incapable of saving, or helping to save, the fallen soul. Nay, the most subtle and damning form of error is persistence in building upon the remnant of good in our own nature, instead of committing the soul entirely to God. "Our nature," he says, "is capable of resuscitation unless an obstacle is put in the way and grace is resisted, which is done by those impious ones who, trusting in their own remaining goodness, and by

force of their own peculiar will and wisdom, choose not to be restored, but seem to themselves to be whole."

One terrific result of the indestructibility of original and ideal humanity is depicted by Luther. "So persistently does the residue of his pristine will inhere in man that even in the damned it becomes almost the sole cause of their hell, that they do not will it, and that they do, with immeasurable vehemence, will the contrary salvation." They cannot consent to their condition. They hate themselves. "And thus the wicked eternally seek to flee damnation, and are moved in a different direction from it, and yet run everywhere into it. Hence they are described in Psalm First as being made dust before the wind. Always in agitation, always flying under the impulse of terror, they nevertheless cannot fly from their horror-striking misery. But the righteous are rooted in God."

This picture of the damned is Dantesque. The mediæval hell, if softened, is certainly not made less awful by the introduction of spiritual anguish. It is once more to be remembered that the idea of God conveyed to Luther's mind in his childhood was one of infinite terror. It need not surprise us that, amid the doubts and temptations which rent his soul during his first years in the convent, there occurred at times an appalling scepticism as to the goodness of God. But his triumph over all such scepticism was complete. God became for him an infinitely loving Father, in whose eyes the chief of all sins was to question His love, to doubt His willingness to save.

It was impossible that Luther should not provoke opposition. In Wittenberg his intense enthusiasm proved contagious, and the spell of his personality irresistible. But he met with sharp rebuffs in other quarters. His experiences, for example, in Dresden, were of a very mixed character. In Dresden, the ruler was Duke George, cousin of Frederick. The Saxon family had divided itself, in the preceding century, into the Ernestine and Albertine branches. Frederick was now head of the former, George of the latter. George was a man of energy and religion, interested in high subjects, and anxious to do his duty. In the summer of 1516 he asked his friend Staupitz to send him, to Dresden, a preacher worth hearing. Staupitz sent his man of men, Doctor Luther. On a July Sunday he preached before Duke George and the ladies and gentlemen of the Court. The words of Christ—"Ye know not what ye ask," spoken in mild rebuke of the two disciples who thought that *they* were the fit and proper men to sit right and left of the enthroned Christ, were the subject of discourse. The preacher expatiated, as always, on man's spiritual impotence and God's omnipotent grace, laying stress on man's incapacity to purchase heaven by merit, or to be saved, in any sense or degree, by works and not by faith alone. To Duke George, regardful of the utilities and the moralities, this doctrine seemed, as it has seemed to tens of thousands before and since, questionable. What! was salvation, then, a free gift, which required no practical performance? Was this fine new Gospel, after

all, a sly way of opening prison doors, and letting loose gaol-birds to prey upon society? Were scamps and scoundrels to be turned into sanctified persons by mere profession of faith? Duke George was deeply exercised in his mind.

The sermon made a profound impression upon the hearers, some approving, some disapproving. There was a buzz of talk about the matter at Court; and at the ducal dinner-table, in the afternoon, it came up for discussion. An honourable lady, Barbara von der Sahla, was among the guests; and to her, presumably as a recognised woman of light and leading, Duke George turned for an opinion of the monk's sermon. It was favourable—nay, enthusiastic. She wished she could again enjoy such sweet discoveries of the infinite and unbought graciousness of God. On such Gospel she would pillow her soul in death. George, much surprised, could not see his way to agreeing with her. It seemed irresistibly plain to George that if salvation were known to be wholly and solely of God, men would become "secure and reckless." Such preaching, to his simple apprehension, was exactly adapted to unsolder the universal framework of morals. It might be fascinating, but it was unsettling; and for his part he wished he had not heard it.

Heard it, however, he had, and perhaps those wonderful sparkling eyes of the monk had intensified the spell it had laid upon him. There were courtiers and theologians enough to take his view rather than

Barbara von der Sahla's, and to assure him that this Luther was a mutinous, malignant person, lifting up irreverent weapons against all that held society in obedience to priest and king. George gave ear to these people, and shaped his course, during long and disastrous years, in obedience to their counsels. But tradition whispers that, after life-long casting over of the matter in his mind—after standing out, in the face of Europe and of history, as the foremost antagonist of Luther and champion of the Pope—George, in his latest hour, decided to let works, good, bad, and indifferent, saints' merits, efficacy of relics, priestly mediation, Church, pope, and all, go by the board, and to cling for salvation to Christ and Christ alone, the Eternal Life, offered by grace, accepted by faith, as he had been admonished to do on that July Sunday, in the monk's sermon.

CHAPTER X.

AN UPSETTING DOCTOR.

Duke George was by no means alone in Dresden in being sharply offended by Doctor Luther. The opposition party in the town—the pope and priest party—were bitterly hostile, circulating malicious rumours, totally false, as to his having made obnoxious allusion in his sermon to certain Court scandals, and laying snares to entangle him in his talk. In a letter to Spalatin,* written some two years later, he gives a lively account of one brush he had with his Dresden adversaries. Having been asked by some persons whom he looked on as friends to join them in a little conviviality, he found himself suddenly the centre of a circle of agitated and acrid disputationists, and called to account for his irreverences to the Schoolmen. Martin was quite the wrong man on whom to try this kind of thing—the last in the world to subside into acquiescence when an attempt was made to take unfair advantage of him. He was much more likely to exaggerate than to extenuate the discrepancy between himself and Thomas Aquinas, in the presence of angry disciples of the latter, breathing scorn and rage against

* De Wette, 52.

a man who refused to bow the knee to their idol. One of his assailants he describes to Spalatin as belonging to Leipzig, a bit of a Master of Arts, a dabbler in the scholastic philosophy (*Magisterculus*, *Thomasterculus*), filled to the chin with a sense of his own omniscience, who at first wreathed his visage in smiles, but soon poured out upon the stranger guest a volley of bitter and clamorous invective. Luther told this vociferous debater that the whole company of Thomists, with their master at their head, did not understand a single chapter of their own Aristotle. And so the clang of battle rose, the fierce word-battle of logical cut-and-thrust. Meanwhile there stood listening in the doorway a Dominican monk, who professed himself afterwards to have been so horrified by the sentiments of Luther that he with difficulty refrained from rushing in and spitting in his face. At length Luther brought matters to a crisis, or at least to a pause, by formally challenging the Leipzig man, with all the tomes of the angelic Doctor at command, to define obedience to God. Whether it was that the Leipziger felt hopelessly at a loss, or whether it struck him that the conviviality was really becoming too grave, he put the challenge aside with a jest. "*Da pastum!*" he cried. "Tip us a fee, then! Shell out, if you want a definition replete with learning and wit!" At this there was a laugh, and the party broke up. At this interview Luther first confronted his impassioned antagonist, Jerome Emser.

Not in Dresden alone, but throughout the towns of

central Germany, there was already a division of opinion respecting Doctor Luther. He was loved; he was hated. At Erfurth, as at Dresden, there were not a few who cordially disliked him. When he drew up a series of propositions, embodying his peculiar tenets on man's will and God's grace, and sent them to friend Lange for submission to the stars of Erfurth University, the response was not flattering. Who was this Luther, with his importunate Biblicism, his arrogant rejection of the authority of Aristotle and the Schoolmen? A restless, noisy, upsetting person, the Erfurth dons were inclined to consider him. Lange received from them a liberal allowance of excellent advice, turning particularly on the beauteous virtue of modesty, for transmission to Martin; who showed himself pointedly ungrateful for the same, and stated that it would give him immense satisfaction to discover in his Erfurth censors some trace of the modesty they preached. He told them, however, to think not of him but of his doctrine, which was not his but God's. "Not my will, nor theirs, nor ours; but Thine be done, Holy Father, who art in heaven! Amen." *

* De Wette, 44.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONVENT VICAR.

Every one knows that Luther was a monk; but have we realised that he was a governor of monks, a superintendent of convents? First as deputy for Staupitz, then as regularly elected Vicar, he bore sway over the Augustinian Order in Misnia and Thuringia. We have a considerable number of letters dashed off by him in the course of his vicariate, as occasion arose, without the faintest idea that they would reach the eye of posterity. They represent, indeed, only a small part of his activity as Vicar, for, from Wittenberg as a centre, he ranged abroad, north, south, east, and west, in personal visitation. They are concerned with the mere routine of convent life, the absence of any striking occurrence almost furnishing matter for remark. But all the more on this account are they errorless in their attestation of his solid and sterling qualities, his masculine insight, and unflagging energy.

Here, to begin with, is a most quiet letter to George Spenlein, a monk of Memmingen.* In some way, as to which we have no information, George had come to owe Staupitz a sum larger than he could pay. Sundry effects, books and articles of clothing, had been sold,

* De Wette, 9.

under the surveillance of Luther, to discharge the debt. With minute exactitude he states the result. A Brussels tunic had fetched a florin, the "greater work" of Trutvetter half a florin, a hood and some etceteras a florin. A book and one or two little things had been offered, but there was no bid for them. The two florins and a half had been paid to Staupitz. Half a florin remained due. George must do his best to earn this, unless, indeed, the kind Staupitz, whom the writer knows to be well disposed towards his debtor, may be induced to let him off. On this minute money matter Luther's statement is a model of lucidity and precision.

He then turns to a subject that sits nearer his heart, and speaks as a spiritual father to his son. "But I want to know what your soul is about; and whether, discarding its own righteousness, it is learning to breathe spiritual life, and to trust in the righteousness of Christ. For in this age of ours presumption is a burning temptation with many, and chiefly with those who strain all their energies to be righteous and good. Not knowing the righteousness of God, which in Christ is freely and in richest bounty given to us, they seek to work themselves up to such a pitch of goodness that they may have confidence to stand erect and unabashed before the face of God, in the adornment of their own virtues, their own merits. Salvation by such a method is impossible. In this error you were once involved. So was I. But now I fight against it—only I have not yet put it down.

"Therefore, my sweet brother, learn Christ and Him

crucified. Learn to sing aloud to Him; and to Him, despairing of yourself, to say, 'Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness; I also am Thy sin: Thou didst assume mine, and didst give Thine to me: Thou didst assume what Thou wast not, and didst give me what I was not.'

"Beware of aspiring to such purity as to be unwilling to seem to yourself a sinner, nay, to *be* a sinner. Christ dwells in none but sinners. For this cause He descended from Heaven, where He dwelt in the righteous, even that He might dwell in sinners. Meditate on that love of His, and you will see His sweetest consolation. If it were for us to arrive, by our own labours and self-afflictions, at peace of conscience, wherefore did He die? Only, then, in Him—by the despair of faith, despair, that is to say, of yourself and your own works blended with triumphant faith in Him*—will you find peace. You will learn from Him that, as He took you upon Him and made your sins His own, so He made His righteousness yours."

Platitude! exclaims many a modern reader. Commonest of commonplaces!

Common or uncommon, platitude outworn or truth eternal, let us at least recognise the historical fact that this doctrine of Luther's—the identification, to put it in one word, of the Christian with Christ—was his talisman or conjuring word in awakening Europe. If you

* Without some freedom of paraphrase I know not how to give the full sense of Luther's expressive Latin: *Non nisi in illo, per fiducialem desperationem tui et operum tuorum, pacem invenies.*

want to know the man and his worth, not a quasi-philosophical abstract or modernised counterfeit of either, you must understand this.

The worth of such religion will obviously depend upon the conception formed of Christ. But if Christian religion means transfiguration of soul and character through Christ, it is not easy to see how Luther's main enterprise—the replacing of the Sun in the Christian firmament—can be repudiated.

We have not done with our letter. Having referred George to Christ, Luther proceeds to point out how his doctrine acts upon conduct.

"If you firmly believe this, as you ought—for he is accursed (*maledictus*) who believes it not—then do thou, in like manner, take upon you undisciplined and erring brethren. Patiently sustain them; make their sins your own; and if you have any good, let it be theirs. Thus teaches the apostle. Bear ye one another's burdens, as Christ also bore you to the honour of God.

"He will teach you all things: only look thou well to what He has done for thee and for all, in order that thou mayest learn what you ought to do for others. If He had chosen to live only among the good, and to die only for His friends: for whom, I beseech you, would He have died, or with whom would He have lived? Do thou likewise, my brother, and pray for me, and the Lord be with thee."

Herein is the complement of what preceded—the link between heaven and earth—the bridge between the

ideal and the real of Christian life. In Luther's version of the Gospel, you are to be to your fellow men, to the utmost possibility of your strength, all that Christ is to you.

Another letter, in which, with glowing ecstacy, he dilates on the cross of Christ, is addressed to a second George, an inmate of the Augustinian Convent at Erfurth.* "The cross of Christ," he says, "has been sent out, in multitudinous fragments, to all the world, and to each man comes his portion always. Thou, therefore, throw it not away, but rather receive it as a thrice-sacred relic, not into a gold or silver casket, but into a golden heart, a heart imbued with gentle charity. For if the wood of the cross was consecrated by the touch of the flesh and blood of Christ, in such manner that its fragments are held in the highest honour, how much more do the injuries, persecutions, passions, and hatreds of men, just or unjust, become the most sacred relics when, not by the touch of His body, but embraced in the charity of His most bitterly wounded heart and Divinely efficient will, they are kissed, blessed, and consecrated, so that cursing becomes blessing, injustice equity, suffering glory, and pain gladness."

On the first of May, 1516, he is in Dresden, and writes to the Prior of the Augustinian convent in Mayence. A monk had behaved ill, run away from his convent in Dresden, and turned up in Mayence. Luther thanks the Prior for having received him, and begs that the wandering sheep may be sent back, or better still,

* De Wette, 10.

persuaded to go of his own accord. "I will receive him with open arms, if he only come; he need not fear my resentment." And then he runs on in a kind of meditative monologue, of sadness and of wonder. "I know, I know, that offences must come. It is no miracle that a man should fall; the miracle is that he should rise again and stand. Peter fell, that he might know himself a mere man. In our day, also, there is such a thing as the fall of cedars of Lebanon, whose heads touch the sky; but even the Angel fell in heaven (most stupendous of wonders!) and Adam in Paradise. What marvel, then, if a reed is shaken in the wind, or a smoking flax extinguished?" *

Merciful as these words prove Luther to have been, he was by no means lax in his principles and methods of government. We come upon an element of sternness in these letters, which was an indestructible fibre in his character, and played an important part in his life. He was little given to sentimental relentings, and might frequently, if asked to show pity, have replied: "I show it most of all when I show justice." His advice was once asked, by the Prior of the Convent of Leitsko, in connection with the punishment of a monk who had been guilty of a gravely criminal offence. His counsel was not on the side of lenity. If the statutes, he said, did not adjudge the culprit to death or perpetual imprisonment, they ought to be rigorously applied. "It is not you," he told his correspondent, "who inflict punishment, but justice and law,

* De Wette, 11.

whose minister, not arbiter, you are." He guarded him against the subtle temptation of being influenced by the thought that he might one day be an equal or even a greater transgressor than the culprit. That was a matter between God and his own soul. In the seat of government he exercised an authority not dependent on his own qualities, and with which he had no right to tamper. "Cherish, therefore, in thy heart humility and meekness against the criminal, but show rigour of hand and of power, for thy power is not thine, but God's; thy humility is not God's, but ought to be thine." * Had Luther been asked how these sentiments could be in consonance with his doctrine of the Divine love, he would, doubtless, have replied that justice embodied in law is a better expression of Divine benevolence than capricious sensibility.

Eminently characteristic is the letter of May, 1516, to Lange, whom he had recently appointed Prior of the Augustinian Convent at Erfurth. It is occupied with minute directions to the new Prior as to keeping the convent accounts, and distinguishing between this head of expenditure and that: how much beer, how much wine, how much bread, how much meat. Lange is to take care that all shall be daily jotted down. In particular he is to have a vigilant eye on the open table of the convent, on its function as a "domus hospitum," a house that entertains strangers. This may be discharged religiously and rightly, as a most important duty towards God, or may occasion vile

* De Wette, 33.

abuses, and make the convent a mere tavern and place of revelry.

It is unnecessary to quote the letter, which is rather lengthy, but it affords graphic illustration of Luther's practical, vigilant good sense and mental quietude. The elevation and enthusiasm of his mood, when grace and righteousness are the subjects of contemplation, prove to be admirably compatible with thrift, and sharp attention to economical details. His delight is in order, and in simple, wholesome, homely things. If this man becomes a revolutionist, he will know what he is about.

A case arose in which he was called upon to bring into exercise his best gifts of government. The Augustinians of Neustadt had fallen out among themselves. Peace and comfort had vanished. Michael Dressel, their Prior, could not manage them. The delicacy of the situation lay in this, that Dressel was, to all appearance, an excellent man, and that no particular delinquency was laid to his charge. Only, he could not get on. What, then, was Luther to say or do? To smoothe things down, to lay the waves with the oil of platitude, to expatiate on the admirable characteristics of Dressel, and exhort the brothers to submit to him; such would have been the course adopted by a commonplace man, and of this the result would almost certainly have been to reduce the convent to a state of chronic dissidence and anarchy. Luther looked the matter in the face, and on the 25th of September, 1516, wrote to the Fathers and Brethren, including Michael Dressel, the Prior, as follows:

"I grieve to hear, as I am the proper person to hear, most worthy Fathers and Brethren, that you live without peace and unity; that, dwelling in one house, you are not of one way; that your heart is not one, your soul not one, according to rule in the Lord. This miserable and useless kind of life comes either from defect in your humility—for where there is humility there is peace—or from my negligence, or indeed from fault both yours and mine, in not praying to the Lord who made us, and in not asking Him to direct our way in His sight, and lead us in His righteousness. Erring, erring, erring is the cause of him who trusts himself to his own counsel, not to say that he presumes to direct others. I am forced accordingly to do that in absence which I shrank from doing in presence: and I should now wonderfully like to be present, but cannot. Accept with salutary obedience this arrangement of mine, if perhaps the Lord of peace may be pleased to work with us. The whole or the chief cause of your trouble is that there is discord between you and the Chapter and Prior, which is more harmful than if brother disagreed with brother. Wherefore, by the authority of my office, I enjoin you, Michael Dressel, to resign your office and give up the seal. By the same authority I absolve you from the duties of Prior-ship in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"I would not have you complain on the ground of my judging you unheard, and giving no ear to your excuses. I believe indeed most firmly that whatever you did was done with the best intention; nor can I

at all imagine that you studiously and in malice did anything whence trouble might arise. You did as much as you had grace to do. For this I thank you, and if any of your brothers have not thus thanked you, they vehemently displease me.

"This reflection ought to console you,—that it is not enough for one to be a good and pious man; it is required that he should suit others and that others should be adapted to him in peace and concord. The best services frequently give no satisfaction, and are with good cause dispensed with, in order that peace may be preserved.

"The Prior, therefore, being set aside, I beseech you by the mercy of Christ that ye forthwith unanimously take into consideration, and choose three in order, according to the statute. Have a care that you do not (as I have frequently had experience of, in futile attempts at election and frustrated takings of votes) choose any one of those who, from holding office or any other reason, are not eligible. By such mistakes time and pains are lost, and votes are given in vain. Therefore I should like you, before proceeding to the election, to proclaim plainly who may not be chosen, so that each one may know to whom he cannot give his vote. Nor would it be amiss if you should specify a few of those who *can* be elected, by way of assistance to such as may perchance be dark on that head.

"But whomsoever you may elect, most worthy brothers, seek by assiduous prayer that the Lord may be pleased to direct him and you. For the Scripture

says, in Jeremiah, 'I know, O Lord, that the way of a man is not his own, nor the steps of a man, that he should walk in them.' For I assure you by these presents, and I foretell, that unless you obtain by your prayers the blessing of government from God, ye will not have peace and a prosperous issue even though St. John the Baptist be your Prior. The whole matter is in God's hand; he who does not believe this will endure vexation and inquietude till he learns it.

"I implore you to be diligent and faithful in respect of the instruction of the young, which is of first and greatest concern in the entire business of the convent, as I said and pressed upon you when present. Farewell, and pray for me and us all."*

A piece of sober composition, truly; without inventive brilliancy of idea or pomp of phrase; but evincing consummate quality in the writer. With clearness he discerns, and with firmness removes, the peccant element in the situation. You may mend a subordinate whose delinquencies are occasional, and powers constant, by pertinent sharpness of reprimand; but you can lecture no man void of the instinct of government into ability to rule men. Dressel must go. Gently, but with no door left open for remonstrance, Luther so decides. And then with what patient practicality does he address himself to the task of instructing the convent in the difficult business of electing a successor! This is one of those letters that help us to understand how it came about

* De Wette, No. 18.

that Luther's countrymen trusted him with implicit confidence.

Need it be said that he had his troubles? Once a man is found with back strong enough to carry weight, and heart not unwilling to oblige, indolent and inefficient humanity is not slow in shifting its burdens upon him. Luther has to adjure his friends in the convent world not to send him hungry monks to provide for. Occasionally, though positively forced to send the intruders back, he would fain retain them as *idonei ad studium*, likely fellows, fit for study, who might be a credit to one. But *urgemur penuriâ;* if we cannot feed the men, we must turn them from the door. Once, while he is actually complaining to Lange, pen in hand, of this sad grievance, "Lo, here!" he exclaims, "this very hour, as I write these words, come two more brothers, students from Cologne. I don't know what the reverend father can be thinking of, to overwhelm me in this manner, without leave asked. We have not enough to give them bed and board." But he never despairs. Always, at intervals, as if his eye caught suddenly the gleam of some well of salvation, he throws in the words, "Christ lives and reigns!" That gaunt, threadbare brothers should wend their way to Wittenberg from the far Rhineland proves that the government and the doctrine of this remarkable Vicar had an attraction for souls with the Divine particle in them. It certainly was not for any creature comforts to be enjoyed in Doctor Luther's convent that monks betook themselves to it. Able, for his own part, to subsist for several days on a herring

and a morsel of bread, he was not the man to encourage luxury in his quarters, or to disjoin plain living from high thinking. He yearned after a more stern and antique model of convent life than his friends patronised. "How do you think," he once exclaims to Lange, half or three-fourths in earnest, with some fractional quantity of jest, "I am to find place for those Sardanapaluses and Sybarites of yours? If you have spoiled them in the training, keep the fine gentlemen you have spoiled (*si perdite educástis, perdite educatos sustinete*)." But the brothers, spoiled or unspoiled, kept pressing towards Wittenberg. Irresistible for ingenuous youth, with any thirst in them for the celestial fountains, is the glow of such eyes as Luther's.

In this same letter in which he twits Lange with his superfine gentlemen, he sportively refers to the multiplicity of his own labours. He would require, he says, two private secretaries, the letters he has to write are so many. He is convent orator, convent reader at table (how he gets time to eat his own dinner is not mentioned), daily in requisition for the convent pulpit. He is parish preacher. He is regent of the studies. He is "Vicar, that is to say, Prior eleven times over." He is superintendent of the fish-ponds in Litz-kau. An interesting item this! Fish are a matter of great importance to convent people. He is pleader in Torgau of causes from the Herzberg—so that he is lawyer as well as fisherman. In the university he lectures on St. Paul, and reads in the Psalter. Not thinking it worth while to mention when or how he eats, he says

that he seldom finds full time for his "Hours," and has wrestlings and temptations from flesh, world, and devil. He ends with a brave laugh. "See what a lazy fellow I am!"

At this time, as often before and after, we find him in peril of his life from the plague. Lange, who loves him well, and perhaps thinks that, for all his laziness, it would be thriftless to lose him, entreats him to quit Wittenberg. He replies, with gay intrepidity, that he will do nothing of the kind. "The world, one may hope, will not founder, though brother Martin goes down." But he is vigilant to avert danger from those under his charge. "The rest of the brothers I shall, if the plague continues to prevail, disperse over the whole earth; but here I am placed, bound by my vow of obedience not to fly until obedience makes it my duty to go. Not that I do not fear death (for I am not the Apostle Paul, but only a reader of the Apostle Paul), but I hope that the Lord will shield me from my fear." Do not the lineaments of a hero begin to dawn out in this Martin?

It is pleasant to find that Frederick, contemplating matters from his high place as sovereign and shepherd of the people, casts his eye with some vividness of satisfaction on our lazy friend, and speaks to his Court chaplain words of warm commendation respecting him. Spalatin proudly passes on the praise, announcing also a present from Frederick to Luther of fine cloth for a monastic habit. In December, 1516, in a letter of reply to Spalatin, there is reference both to the

present and the praise. With graceful brevity he thanks Frederick for cloth which he would himself pronounce too rich for the wear of a monk, "were it not the gift of a Prince"—a fine touch of knightliness in the peasant-born! Of the commendation he says: "I am not worthy that any man should have remembrance of me, not to say a Prince, and such and so great a Prince. And in truth I see and feel that those who mention me to my disadvantage do me most good."

In all these letters there is traceable the influence of that view of salvation by grace through faith which Luther had accepted as the life of his soul. "Blessed be God!" he cries, "who again commands the light to break in splendour (*splendescere*) from darkness." He has arrived at the firm conviction that a paralysis of spiritual life had ensued in Christendom from the substitution of human taskwork for the righteousness of God. "Make the tree good." Intellect possessed with faith in God—affections glowing with love for God—the personal change, in one word, being made sure—good works will follow. "Abel," he says, "was accepted before his works." More and more it is becoming the habit of his mind to apply his doctrine as a test in practical judgments. He admires Erasmus; but with severe limitation. Scholarship he will not admit to hold the key of Scripture, although good scholarship has the clear advantage over bad; it is a more Divine power that must open the eye to the secret of eternal life in Scripture. He honours St. Augustine, not because he

was a Father, but because he referred salvation wholly to God. Of Cyprian, the idol of all high churchmen, he speaks with scorn almost unmitigated. "In his *sermons* Cyprian is not inept." * Tauler, on the other hand, he highly extols. "Neither in Latin nor in our own language have I met with a theology more wholesome or more in consonance with the Gospel." † He rejoices that in the University the star of St. Augustine waxes and that of Aristotle wanes. The students forsake the Schoolmen and take to the Bible. For himself he longs to proclaim the truth on the house-tops, not muttering it in corners as he seems to feel he has hitherto done. He pants for some occasion to maintain it in public disputation in college or in convent. The words startle us when we note their date—September, 1517. The quietude, the prosperous and pleasant activity, reflected in his letters of this period, are soon to be exchanged for the din of conflict.

The reader may now have some idea of the Reformation *in* Luther; it is time, therefore, to proceed to an account of the Reformation *by* Luther.

* De Wette, 31. † Ibid., 25.

Book V.

THE NINETY-FIVE THESES.

OCTOBER, 1517—AUGUST, 1518.

Book V.

THE NINETY-FIVE THESES.

CHAPTER I.

THE WITTENBERG CHURCH-DOOR.

Thus, then, it was with Luther at the fall of the leaf in that year 1517. He dwelt much, in his musing moments, upon the spiritual character of repentance, the mysterious silent process in which old things passed away and all things became new. The tyrannic exactor of penance had for him become the God of grace. Law had been quickened into life. The weary dragging of the slave's chain had been exchanged for a calm, glad movement, like that of celestial dance, in which love and obedience were one.

Suddenly, while his soul glowed in the trance-like joy of such meditations, his ear was rent by a storm of discordant noises, beating of drums, cries of marketing and money-changing. Months before, some whisper had reached him of the operations of one Tetzell, a vendor of Indulgence, and he had felt that it might, ere long, become his duty to "knock a hole in that fellow's drum." But he had confined himself for the time to his more immediate work. The ecclesiastical Barnum had now, however, carried his show into the neighbourhood.

Juterbog, at which Tetzell had erected his booth, was within a few miles of Wittenberg.

Luther could keep silence no longer. In the secrecy of the confessional, members of his congregation whom he knew to be persistently immoral demanded absolution on the strength of the Pope's letters of Indulgence, bought from Tetzell. People told him that Tetzell affirmed the absolute omnipotence of the Indulgence—it would cover the sin of one who, were that possible, had violated the mother of God. And what Tetzell laid stress upon was, they said, the payment of the money. The chink of the coin in the box was the one thing needful! Then the soul was pardoned. Then, if already in purgatory, the ransomed spirit rose to heaven. "Ho! all ye that labour under a reluctance to forego sin's sweetness, and yet would escape sin's punishment, pay your money and have its worth. Ho! all ye whose relatives or friends are in purgatory, will ye not have Christian bowels and save them from their pain!" Wherever Tetzell came, he was received with acclamations. Civic authorities, artisan guilds, school processions, went forth to meet and escort him. Before him, on resplendent cushion of satin or cloth of gold, was carried the Papal bull, or brief of Indulgence. A cross, marked with the Papal arms, was carried in his rear. When he entered a town, the *cortège* proceeded to the church of the place. There the bull was displayed; the great red Roman cross was set up; and Tetzell preached on the unspeakable benefits of the Indulgence. "Ho! every one that wants a royal road to

heaven, a primrose path *from* the everlasting bonfire, let him buy Indulgence letters."

Such was the phenomenon of Papal Indulgence, as popularly apprehended, as seen in its simple breadth and blackness coming between the souls of his people and the heavenly light, which presented itself to Martin Luther in the brown October of 1517. He was vexed at heart. The fountains of his soul were moved, and these, when deeply stirred, were more akin to the volcanic forces, the lakes of fire that lie asleep in the heart of Etna and Chimborazo, than he was himself aware of. What was he to do? First of all, he had addressed himself to various episcopal authorities, entreating them to exert their authority against the Indulgence traffic. Some acquiesced in his sentiments, but did nothing; others made a jest of the affair. Then, without consulting any of his Wittenberg friends, he drew up his Ninety-five Theses, and, on Friday, the 31st of October, probably about noon, posted them on the door of the Castle Church.

The day and the place were appropriate: that is to say, they were adapted, by strength of contrast, to lend force to a demonstration against Indulgences. The day was the eve of All Saints. The place was that church in which the Princes of Saxony had for ages been accumulating their hoard of relics. To it pilgrimages were made as to a shrine of great distinction, richly endowed with the very power of Indulgence which Luther now assailed. The 1st of November was celebrated, in the Castle Church of Wittenberg, not only

as a festival in honour of saints and martyrs, but as the anniversary of the consecration of the building. On the evening of the 31st of October Luther himself opened the celebration by preaching upon his great subject of salvation by grace, and did not fail, before leaving the pulpit, to call attention to the subject of repentance and the forgiveness of sin, warning the people against the merchants of Indulgence.

Judge, therefore, whether, on issuing from the afternoon service on that autumn Saturday, the Wittenbergers would not scan with some interest the Ninety-five Theses which the preacher had nailed up. Judge whether the pilgrims next day, as they gazed upon the world-famous relics then brought forth for adoration—the sacred bones glittering amid gold and jewellery—would not be sensible of some amazement, conscious of some presentiment of change?

Those Ninety-five Theses, like so many other manifestoes that are signal-marks in history, have long since taken their place among the documents which only biographers and historians read. The completeness of the success which attended them has reduced them to objects of antiquarian curiosity. An ordinary-looking knife enough, you say;—but it killed Julius Cæsar. The Theses express the commonest truths—but they brought down a mighty system.

No one would have more fully admitted than Luther that, apart from abuses which had crept in, and as defined and guarded by the best authorities, the institution of Indulgence was not shocking to the spiritual instincts

of mankind. The Church, represented by the Pope, claimed to remit, by Indulgence, penalties which she had herself imposed. Nothing could seem more reasonable than this; and when the deft advocate of the Papacy, getting you into the learned atmosphere of libraries, undertakes to point out to you that Protestants have hardly done justice to the theory of Indulgences, as set forth by Masters of Sentences and Angelic Doctors, he is likely enough to convince you that he has something of a case. But you are to recollect that when Luther nailed his Theses to the Wittenberg church door, his soul was vexed not so much on account of the theological deflections of Lombard or Aquinas as on account of flagrant iniquities which were choking spiritual life out of the hearts of simple peasants and artisans.

Leaving theological experts to investigate the abstruse and theoretical parts of the subject, readers will do well to note three things which, inevitably and at a first glance, reveal themselves in the Theses, and which go far to account for the enormous impression made by them upon the contemporaries of Luther.

The first is their clear and bold proclamation of the Spirituality of Repentance. The second is their exposure of the flagitiousness of making a Gain of Godliness. The third is their decisive, though wary and hardly disrespectful, Inculpation—to use a purposely indefinite term—of Church and Pope. Of each of these a word in succession.

I.—The Spirituality of Repentance.

The first of these Theses ran as follows: "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, says Repent, He means that the whole life on earth of those who believe in Him shall be an unremitted repentance."

These words may be described as the essential purport of Luther's spiritual history. No words can be conceived in which he could more appropriately have addressed himself, for the first time, to Germany and to Christendom. Repentance, on this view, is a perpetual burning out of the soul of all dead, all bad, all excrementitious matter—all that does not feed the soul's life—analogous to the respiratory burning that goes on in the lungs with every breath we draw. A living death, a dying life; a permanent sorrow of contrition and of separation, a permanent joy in the rising energy and fresh inspiration of purer, higher life. No specific task to be performed and to be done with; no penance, transacted in an hour or stretched through laborious weeks or months, or compounded for by payment of money; but a state of mind, an habitual turning from evil and embracing good, rising from sin and aspiring to holiness.

We may change the dialect which Luther employed. We may express ourselves in terms of philosophical ethics instead of theology. But the truth spoken in this, the first of the Ninety-five Theses, will remain unshaken. So long as we admit the existence of spiritual good and spiritual evil; so long as we believe

in the possibility of moral bettering: whether we call the state of mind to be cast behind, and got away from, sin, and the state of mind to be aimed at holiness; or the one a state of vice, and the other a state of virtue; or the one the lower self, and the other the higher self; or the one the common and the other the ideal: it will remain true, as Luther affirms, that repentance is an inward and an unending process, not a mechanical, single, and final act.

This is rational religion. The sixteenth century, in relation to the mediæval centuries, dates the attainment of intellectual majority by Western Europe. Christian mankind came of age. Luther was the voice of European manhood emerging from spiritual childhood. The ethics of repentance enunciated by him are in substance those of full-grown men, both in the ancient classic and in the modern scientific eras. Not only with Paul and John, but with Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Luther stands on the mountain-summit of spiritual ethics.

Will it be objected that the perpetuation of repentance through life tends to develop morbid conditions of mind—to foster gloom and an unsocial gravity? It is better to admit that the objection deserves candid consideration than to put it jauntily aside. Excessive introspection is malignantly hurtful. The soul that cowers with shuddering wing over the pit of its own defects is apt to suck in malaria. Craven fear, trembling at the thought of sin that seems too dark to be forgiven, is alien to mental health. On the other hand, we must admit that if the element of seriousness is eliminated

from the spiritual life, the reality of worth goes with it. The wisest physicians of the soul have said that he who has had no converse with "divinest melancholy" is of shallow worth.

> The man of trivial hopes and fears,
> Who never dipped his bread in tears,
> Who never, through the anguished hours,
> While Night moved slow on wings of lead,
> Sat weeping on his lonely bed,
> He knows not you, ye Heavenly Powers.*

The poet-sage, an ardent admirer of Luther, who wrote these words, was unsurpassed for blithesome elasticity of nature, and has been challenged for the extent to which he made religion and happiness convertible terms. The true doctrine of repentance, taken along with the doctrine of the illimitable grace of God, involves no danger to the soul from corrosive sorrow and brooding introspection. The self-hatred, the sin-hatred, of repentant man, is but that repulsion from the worse which is impulsion towards the better. The pain involved in repentance is the sting of aspiration —a sting not of death, but of life. And the pain has no right to exist for a moment, except from the soul's lack of faith in the omnipotence of grace; the pain vanishes in an instant when the soul can bathe by faith in the Eternal Fountain of Enjoyment,

* "Wer nie sein Brod mit Thränen ass,
Wer nie die kummervollen Nächte
Auf seinem Bette weinend sass,
Er kennt euch nicht ihr himmlischen Mächte."—*Goethe.*

God. Never did Luther speak with more fiery concentration of conviction than when he warned men against morbid and monastic agonies of self-inspection and self-purification. Forward, ever forward, was his cry, the repentant soul throwing all its energies into the effort to attain to higher things, paralysed or retarded by no memory of fault.

II.—God and Mammon.

The second of the truths or lessons inscribed on the Theses too vividly for misapprehension or oversight is the iniquity of connecting the payment of money with the bestowal of a spiritual benefit or the pardon of sin. There is nothing in the Theses insisted on more vehemently than this. They may be described as ninety-five thongs in a lash to whip those from the temple who profane sacred things by making them subsidiary to gain. Foes and friends have admitted Luther's princely indifference to money, and his own entire superiority to any failing on this side may have intensified the scornful abhorrence with which he regarded every attempt to use the vessels of the sanctuary for the gathering up of lucre. In one Thesis, the saying, imputed, in the common parlance of the day, to Tetzell, that, when the coin chinked in the box the soul in purgatory flew up to heaven, is branded as a lie. In another, the revolting idea of pardon being purchasable by money, even for sins so impossibly atrocious as violating the Madonna, is held up to execration.

Roman Catholic defenders of Tetzell aver that all

the stories against the Indulgence traffic—stories as old as the Decameron of Boccaccio—clustered round his name.* This is extremely probable. Tetzell was the representative, to the popular imagination, of the most shameless audacity of puffery in connection with Indulgences. He was the Barnum of his day—a genius in the art of advertising, at a time when that lucrative craft had not yet bloomed into the splendour we are privileged to behold.

One has more sympathy with those defenders of the Papacy who speak up for Tetzell than with those of them who would make him a scapegoat for the sins of his ecclesiastical superiors. Tetzell knew very well what he was expected to do and paid for doing. The one thing needful was the money. Like Dirk Hatteraick, he did not fail to do his duty to his employers. He was far too shrewd to imagine that people would empty their pockets freely if perplexed with distinctions between God's forgiveness and the Church's forgiveness, or if importuned to give heed to inward repentance.

There is, perhaps, no form of wickedness that more deeply offends a delicate sense of Christian honour than that of seeking lucre in the name of religion. But there is also no form of badness more fiercely resented and detested by the great body of men. All fraud is hateful, but hypocritical fraud is admittedly the worst of fraud, and every one detests the cruel meanness of robbing the bodies of the poor under pretence

* "Johannes Tetzell," by Karl Wilhelm Hermann. Frankfort, 1882.

of enriching their souls. Luther knew how sternly peasants toil. The figure of his mother, her back bent under the faggots she carried from the wood, never faded from his imagination. It was the peasant and the poor artisan who were most likely to be cajoled by Tetzell. He, therefore, made it one grand aim of the Theses to spoil Tetzell's trade; and no circumstance tended more powerfully than this to make him the spokesman of all classes.

III.—The Arraignment of the Pope.

Luther was, of course, well aware that Tetzell was an instrument in the hands of others, but there is no likelihood that he was acquainted with the exact nature and terms of the engagement between the monk and his superiors. The Indulgence, however, was, on the face of it, the Pope's. The third of those causes which may be signalised as chiefly concerned in lending potency to the Theses was the impeachment of the Pope.

This was managed with great skill—almost with tenderness—but none the less effectually on that account. In many of the Theses Luther speaks as the candid friend of the Pontiff. He will save the Holy Father from his injudiciously zealous servants. He is profuse of assurances to the reader that the Pope could not possibly mean this, and must of necessity mean that; the Pope's presumed meaning always being in accordance with Catholic theology, as expounded by the orthodox authorities, but at the same time infallibly adapted to spoil Tetzell's trade:—

"Christians are to be taught that the Pope is by no means of opinion that the purchase of indulgence is to be compared in value with works of mercy."

"Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor, or lends to those who are in want, makes a better use of his money than the man who buys Indulgence."

"Christians are to be taught that he who sees his neighbour want, and does not relieve him, but buys Indulgence instead, purchases not the Pope's indulgence, but the wrath of God."

"Christians are to be taught that those who have no more than a competence are bound to retain what is wanted for their own support and that of their relatives, and on no account to squander it on Indulgence."

"Christians are to be taught that the Pope, in dispensing Indulgence, as he has more need of devout prayer than of money, so is more desirous of obtaining it."

Gratifying, no doubt, it would be to a papa of Christendom to have his piety so graciously assumed and so sweetly praised; but there are some compliments which one might prefer to take for granted. Leo would not improbably have thanked Luther to keep his breath to cool his porridge. At last the applausive Doctor ventures upon a stroke which forces the most innocent believer in his ingenuousness to doubt whether he is quite so simple as he looks:

"Christians are to be taught that the Pope, if only he were acquainted with the cruel extortions of the

Indulgence preachers, would rather that St. Peter's Church were burnt to ashes than that it should be built with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep."

À propos of the Church of St. Peter's, the completion of which was the ostensible object of Tetzell's mission, Jürgens quotes from Hegel what struck that philosopher as a notable instance of historical parallelism. "As the masterpiece of universal art," says Hegel, "the Athene of Athens and her temple-hill, owed their origin to the money of the allies of Athens, and led to the ruin both of Athens and her allies, so the finishing of the Church of St. Peter and of Michael Angelo's Last Judgment, in the Papal chapel, marked the day of doom for the proud edifice of the Papacy."

Few readers of the Thesis last quoted would be likely to turn away without imputing something at least as culpable as negligence to the supreme Pontiff in relation to the interests of his flock. And as we proceed, the tone becomes less formally reverent, the attitude less ostentatiously civil. The writer grows interrogative, and some of his queries are not without pungency.

"Why does not the Pope release all souls from purgatory, out of sheer impulse of thrice-holy love? Is not this the most righteous of motives?"

Luther never produced anything more like himself than these Theses. In thought and diction they are characteristic. The act of hammering them to the church-door may be looked upon as symbolical, the style being a succession of hammer-strokes. Luther,

as himself well knew, was never a master of language in the sense in which Erasmus was a master of language. He did not round and polish his sentences. His gift of expression was that of saying with unmistakable clearness and force what he meant to say. It was substantially the same kind of linguistic power which we in England have seen exemplified in the writings of Swift and Bunyan, in the sermons of Mr. Spurgeon, in the speeches of Mr. John Bright. It has the solid quality that acts upon the great central body, the great middle class, of mankind. It may be doubted whether any man known to history has possessed the gift of moving, by speech, great masses of sensible, serious, wholly unaffected, but not highly cultivated or markedly superior persons, in such perfection as Martin Luther.

But the Theses illustrate a deeper characteristic, a deeper power, of Luther's than that of his words. He possessed, by genius, by sympathetic instinct, a unique appreciation of the spiritual wants and cravings of his time. His heart, more than that of any other man, beat in tune with the profoundest tendencies of his age. His foot-fall, as he walked towards the Castle Church of Wittenberg on that October day, timed a new advance of the procession of mankind. As is usual in such cases, he was unconscious of what he was doing—unaware of the enormous effects his act was to produce—clear only as to his own duty.

For a few hours or days it might have been thought that the effect was to be nothing at all. No one came forward at the moment to enter the lists against the

Wittenberg doctor. No one took up his pen to refute the Theses. In point of fact, everybody who read them perceived that, though well adapted for academic disputation, their main interest was not speculative, but practical. If, however, no champions of University renown prepared to attack or defend them, men made them the subject of eager discussion at firesides, in street corners, in all places of public resort. In a fortnight they had penetrated to every corner of Germany. But the voice that spoke in the Theses was not merely German; it was European; and the report of them sped across the frontiers to Paris, to Madrid, to London, to Rome. Europe was in the last hour of unquiet sleep before the dawn. At the sound of the Theses, as at the report of a signal gun, the nations awoke. Never had the Pope been so frankly confronted. Never had the corruption of the Church, of which the consciousness had been deepening in the best minds for centuries, been so pointedly denounced. Never had the mediæval system been so comprehensively, luminously, simply challenged. What was said could be universally recognised as the old Gospel, and yet it made all things new. Those who had long yearned for reform lifted up their heads, believing that the hour had come, and the man. Those who were blindly devoted to the old system felt both their ears tingle and the joints of their knees unloose. Tetzell, aloft on his car, tried, for a little time, to fancy that no great harm was done, but he found himself in the position of Pharaoh when his chariot-wheels were taken off in the middle of

the Red Sea. In vain did he try to keep the wheels going round. In vain did he attempt to run Theses of his own. In vain did his friends get him dubbed Doctor of Theology by the University of Frankfurt-on-the-Oder. In vain did three hundred Dominicans assay to steady him in his seat. Tetzell's occupation was gone.

Like many other epoch-making occurrences in the history of the world, the publication of the Theses was not at the time seen to be of importance. But in a few years this became too plain to be hidden from any one, and the myth-making faculty of sapient mankind could not tolerate the idea that there had been no supernatural demonstration of any kind on the occasion. Protestant myth-makers, with their curious infelicity of invention and didactic pedantry of speech, could not omit such an opportunity for maundering. It is one of the most damaging blemishes on D'Aubigné's work, so admirable in almost all respects, that he takes *au sérieux* the stupid myth of Frederick of Saxony's dream about the Theses. "I dreamed," the Elector is represented as having said to his brother John, "that Almighty God sent a monk to me, who was the true son of the Apostle Paul. All the Saints accompanied him, according to the command of God, in order to testify to me in his favour, and to declare that he was not come with any fraudulent design, but that all he did was agreeable to the will of God. They asked me at the same time graciously to allow him to write something on the church door of the Castle of Wittenberg. The pen that he used was so long that its extremity reached even to Rome, wounded

the ears of a lion that was couched there, and shook the triple crown on the Pope's head. . . . I dreamt that all the Princes of the Empire, you and I amongst the rest, were flocking to Rome, trying one after the other to break this pen; but the more we exerted ourselves the stiffer it became; it resisted as if it had been made of iron; at length we were tired. . . Suddenly I heard a loud cry: from the monk's long pen had issued a great number of other pens." And so forth.

This is manifestly not a dream at all, but an allegory, and a very wooden one. The composer, as is the way with myth-makers of the stupider kind, knows just as much, in connection with his subject, as all the world knows, but has no conception of what may be called the more nicely exact facts relating to it. Any one capable of appreciating the position of Frederick of Saxony at the time when Luther placed his Theses on the Wittenberg church door would have been deterred, were it only by a sense of humorous absurdity, from making the Saints plead with him on behalf of Luther. The Doctor's common-sense method of dealing with the Saints was one of those points that specially exercised the conscience of Frederick, and he was far more likely to dream of their pleading against Luther than on his behalf. And if ever a negative proposition admitted of being established since men began to reason, it can be proved that Frederick did *not* dream such a dream. Luther, in the afternoon of life, became fond of signs and wonders alleged to have been connected with what he sincerely believed

to be his Divinely-enjoined mission against the Papacy; but never, in his most garrulous hour of table-talk, did he make allusion to this dream. Melanchthon makes no reference to it in his life of Luther. Spalatin makes no mention of it in his life of Frederick. Most pointedly conclusive of all, our old friend Matthesius, the prattling, credulous man, who so dearly prized any semblance of miracle in relation to his adored friend, the prophet of the Germans, never heard of it. That he was hard-up for mythical apparatus to dress out the grand event of October 31st, 1517, may be held to be demonstrated by his desperate clutch at a miraculous prediction of the same. The truly pitiful record of Lutheran myth-making on the posting up of the Theses reaches a climax of absurdity in the following passage from the innocent old prattler's volume: "Of this year has Christendom, in Saint Ambrose's Song of Praise, long previously made announcement, though in a veiled and secret fashion. In all places of worship, with joy and exultation, this verse of the *Te Deum Laudamus* has been sung: tIbI CherVbIn et seraphIn InCessabILI VoCe proCLaMant. In these letters stands inscribed the number of this year."* The capital letters, M (1,000); C, four times (400); L, twice (100); V, twice (10); and I, seven times (7); taken at the Roman numeration, yield 1517!!! Macaulay's numerical identification of the House of Commons with the Beast in the Revelation was nothing to this.

* Matthesius, Zweite Predi t., p. 20, Dritte Auflage. Berlin, 1883.

CHAPTER II.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

It has been mentioned that Luther wrote to several influential persons before posting up his Theses. On the very day when he took that step he addressed a letter to one who stood above them all, the highest dignitary in the ecclesiastical world of Germany, Albert of Hohenzollern, Electoral Prince of the Empire, and Archbishop of Magdeburg and Mayence. To Albert, next to Pope Leo of Rome, was due his ecclesiastical allegiance.

The letter begins in a tone of what strikes moderns as abject humility. "Who am I, Monk Martin, a mere *fæx hominum*, off-scouring of mankind, that I should dare send a letter to your sublime Altitude!" But this is no more than the fashion of the time. Penniless monk as he is, and though the man he addresses is a prince and archbishop, Luther is not really moved from his composure and self-respect. Grappling promptly with his subject, he represents to Albert that Indulgences are being hawked about, under his Altitude's alleged sanction, in a thoroughly flagitious and indefensible manner. Having described the enormities of the Indulgence traffic in terms corresponding to those

used in the Theses, and made a few remarks on the duties of episcopal eminences to safeguard the souls of their flocks, he calls special attention to the manual of instruction delivered to the merchants of Indulgence under the advertised sanction of the Archbishop, politely taking it for granted—such civility has a sting in it—that these manuals only *pretended* to Albert's approval. The express tendency of the manual was, he points out, to represent the money payment as the essential thing, and contrition of soul as comparatively unimportant. He vehemently entreats that the manual may be disowned and withdrawn.*

On some early day in November, 1517, in some hall or chamber suited to archiepiscopal and princely splendour, this letter of Luther's was put into the hand of the thrice-eminent Albert. A glance would show him that it was from the monk and Doctor whose Theses were making such a noise, and that it consisted of a frank and fervent appeal to himself to put down Tetzell, and bring to an end what was at once a desecration of religion and a fraud upon the poor.

The look of Albert's face when he had finished the letter has not been described; but imagination can fearlessly aver that it was not one of unmixed satisfaction: that it was one, in fact, of embarrassment bordering on dismay. The ingenuous Doctor was probably not quite aware how prickly some of his sentences were likely to be for the Archbishop; but the reader, if he will listen to a fact or two respecting

* De Wette, 42.

Albert's character and position, cannot fail to appreciate their pungency.

Albert belonged to a family which, in the sixteenth century, had already made its mark in European history—the family of Hohenzollern. Joachim, the Electoral Prince of Brandenburgh, was his eldest brother. He was himself still a young man, not quite thirty, and retained no small trace of the glowing and generous ambitions with which he had started in public life. On his first entrance into Mayence, in 1514, he had been greeted with a panegyric by Ulrich von Hutten, a decisive proof that he took rank in the Liberal party of Germany, and aspired to do his leading by the aid of light. He favoured culture, and was among the patrons of Reuchlin and Erasmus. There is no reason to believe that he ever became capable of conscious baseness, and at this time it was his proudest wish to shine among the stars of human progress.

But there were flaws in the marble of Albert's heroism. He loved show. He did not love the penetrating thought and sustained earnestness that go to the roots of things. If he blundered into a fault, he was scarce man enough to own it to himself and to the world—he was too apt to veil it, to gloze it over, to execute careful strategic movements with a view to evading its consequences. Perhaps there is nothing worse to be said of him than that he had not strength to be decided, to be consistent, to be void of all insincerity, all duplicity. But this was a kind of character to which Luther, the most determined, bold,

and straightforward of men, had a natural and invincible antipathy. "I would that thou wert cold or hot."

If Luther quite knew what he was doing, his letter to Albert was bold indeed, for the sad truth is that his most Reverend Altitude had a personal interest in the coin that clinked in Tetzell's box. Albert was ostentatious; and ostentation wants cash. Generally speaking, the Hohenzollerns have been as remarkable for putting money in the purse, and for keeping it there, as for handling steel; but Albert, like one or two others in the kindred, was profuse in his outlay, fond of pomp and ceremony, a profuse and somewhat impecunious Herr. When the Pope made that magnificent addition to Albert's previous grandeurs in virtue of which he became Archbishop of Mayence, with annexed Electoral Princedom, the occasion could not be fitly signalised unless the new dignitary received from Leo the *Pallium*, a strip of cloth embroidered with black and red crosses, in which Prince-Archbishops of Mayence were invested. Pope Leo, always the politest of men, was courtesy itself in his easy compliance with the irregularity of accumulating multitudinous dignities on one head; but he was still more impecunious than Albert, and really could not dispense with his little fee of fifteen thousand pounds. How could the money be raised?

The Fuggers of Augsburg were the kings' bankers of the period, and the Hohenzollern Archbishop knew that they would lend him the money, if only he could give them a sufficient guarantee that it would be repaid.

Leo engaged to repay half the sum if an Indulgence were published in Germany. Albert undertook the practical business of having the Indulgence promulgated, and of selecting an efficient man to commend it to the people. The Fuggers advanced the amount, stipulating that the due instalments should be handed over to their representative as he accompanied the chief preacher of the Indulgence. The man of Albert's choice was Tetzell.

Thus it came to pass that, in the series of transactions out of which the Reformation immediately arose, a leading member of the Hohenzollern family, now headed by the German Emperor, was intimately associated with Pope Leo, of the House of Medici. These two held the threads which wagged the tongue and moved the arms of the speechifying, drumming puppet called Tetzell.

The discerning reader will understand, therefore, how Albert's face, when he read Luther's letter, might wear a look of considerably qualified satisfaction. Tetzell, he would feel, had been overdoing the business to a scandalous extent. This Wittenberg Doctor was clearly in the right. And yet? and yet? How could he, with the Pope and the Fuggers on his hands, strike out decisively against the Indulgence? Albert resolved upon trying compromise and conciliation. Might it not be possible to hold Tetzell by the left hand, while extending to Luther at least three fingers of the right? Might it not be well to make trial of that grand device of the forcible-feeble, Hush up?

Accordingly, one day before the dreary bleakness of November had given place to the sterner frosts of December, there appeared suddenly in Luther's quiet cell at Wittenberg a distinguished visitor—*Dominus Abbas Lenensis*, the Lord Abbot of the monastery of Lenin: no less! He announced himself as the bearer of a letter from the Bishop of Brandenburgh, and as empowered also to express to Luther, by word of mouth, the sentiments of the Bishop. The letter and the messenger alike entreated him to proceed no further at present in the dissemination of the Theses, and to defer printing a sermon which he had preached to the people in German on Indulgences. The Lord Abbot, speaking for those who sent him—that is to say, overtly for the Bishop of Brandenburgh, and covertly for the Prince-Archbishop—was good enough to explain that no fault was found with the principles of the Theses. No wish was entertained to shield those abuses and extravagances which had associated themselves with the proclamation of the Indulgence. Only, to avoid scandal and excitement, it was earnestly desired that there might be some reserve and delay.

Luther was greatly affected. The thought that such a messenger, with such prompters in the background, should have sought him in the seclusion and lowliness of his cell, was for the moment bewildering. In a state of confusion (*pudore confusus*), he declared himself content to accept the suggestions made. In point of fact, it would have been not only ungracious but unreasonable to do less. No change of opinion was

prescribed to him. His advisers professed themselves to be his allies in discountenancing the abuses against which he had inveighed. No word seems to have been expressly said of the Prince-Archbishop or of Luther's letter to him, but we need have no doubt as to who gave the hint of the interview to the Bishop of Brandenburgh. It is to be observed that no time was specified during which Luther was expected to abstain from active operations. All that was stipulated for was a modicum of reticence and delay.* That Luther should keep himself in the background for a little time, diligently prosecuting his studies, reviewing the whole subject-matter of Indulgences, clearing up all that was hazy in his notions as to the line of demarcation between the powers of the Church and the immediate ministry of the Spirit of truth, was no evil for him or for the cause of reform.

Probably, therefore, when his trusted emissaries reported to the Prince-Archbishop how they had fared, the latter would congratulate himself on the result. But if he imagined that the affair was hushed up, he was mistaken. The worst of all possible ways of dealing with this glittering-eyed monk was that of duplicity. For every opponent he had a vigorous blow; but the equivocal friend was his soul's abhorrence.

* De Wette, 43.

CHAPTER III.

VARIETIES.

While the Theses were doing their work—stimulating discussion, awakening attention, setting men on their guard against the Indulgence preachers—Luther kept himself, for a little time, out of the fray. The adversaries who rushed into the arena against him were unworthy of his steel. Tetzell made as good a show of resistance as could have been expected, attempting to entrench himself behind the infallible authority of his patron, the Pope. Albert of Hohenzollern, the Prince-Archbishop, anxiously holding up washen hands to the public, lent Tetzell aid in his own wary fashion. Under the auspices of the University of Frankfurt-on-the-Oder, and with the help of Wimpina, a theologian countenanced by Albert, Tetzell defied the Wittenberg Doctor. On the other side of Germany, also, Luther had venomous assailants. Hoogstraten, of Cologne, the persecutor of Reuchlin, impelled by the twofold motive of paying off an old score to a defender of the Hebrew scholar, and doing a congenial bit of work in the way of blackening the world's windows against light, proclaimed him a heretic. These people raised a good deal of dust and noise; and it was well that he remained

beyond the tumult, writing confidential letters to his friends, and prosecuting various lines of thought and study.

Hoogstraten and Company he regarded with settled scorn. His difficulty, he wrote to Spalatin,* was not in finding arguments wherewith to triumph over and crush foes like these, but in preventing contempt from carrying him to un-Christian lengths. "For they are so vacant of culture, human or divine, that conflict with them is a matter replete with degradation. Their utter ignorance generates an incredible audacity, and an effrontery harder than brass." Though he could not deal publicly, however, with such adversaries, it was impossible for him to remain indifferent to them. They clamorously reviled him, and defamed, for his sake, the whole University of Wittenberg. He felt it to be a duty, therefore, if not to answer them, which such fellows, "ruder than rudeness itself," did not deserve, yet to go carefully and thoughtfully over the whole ground which he had broken in the Theses, and to publish, in form of a treatise, not only the propositions themselves, but a commentary upon them. With this very important work he was mainly occupied in the winter months of 1517-18, and the succeeding months of spring. In his narrow cell at Wittenberg, while the hungry winds swept over the bleak landscape, making more desolate the sandy flats and shivering Elbe, he scanned the Scriptures, wrestled in prayer, consulted Augustine and Aquinas, earnestly endeavouring to write down the

* De Wette, 54.

truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, on that ancient and ever-venerable problem, how the soul that has sinned may not die, but attain to pardon and to peace.

The work that was the outcome of these studies and musings issued in Latin under the title of *Resolutiones*, is of great value, and will be studied by all who think it worth their pains to be accurately acquainted with the theology of the Reformers. It elucidates, amplifies, and defends, in a masterly manner, the Ninety-five Theses. But when one has studied it long, and followed the luminous but, alas! also voluminous Jürgens in his analysis of it, and written down the result, one is compelled to put the whole aside, as hopelessly uninteresting to a busy and non-theological generation.

Turning to his general correspondence, we find him referring more than once to Erasmus. Keenly in sympathy with the forward movement of the age, earnestly loyal to culture in all its forms and fields, and possessing a strong sense of humour, Luther, like all bright spirits in 1518, admired and extolled the then sovereign of European letters. But there was a limit, fixed and inexorable, to his enthusiasm for Erasmus. This is hinted at when he has occasion to send Spalatin a Dialogue of the master's, which, he says, he does not wish to see circulated. True, it is written "jocundly, eruditely, ingeniously, in a word, Erasmically;" and, as one reads it, one cannot choose but laugh. Nevertheless, he does not rejoice in it. It tickles his brain, but it wounds his heart. Its

merriment is at the backslidings and miseries of the Church of Christ, and every Christian, when he thinks of these, ought not to laugh, but to cry to God with groans of anguish.*

There exists no utterance of our Doctor's more characteristic than this. He loves his Church with the sacred passion of a devoted son for his spiritual mother. A jest at her expense is sacrilege. If it is a coarse, broad jest, he spurns it as a palpably evil thing. Down, thou spirit of impudent buffoonery and godless scorn! —for *thee* is no place in the battle of the Lord! To Voltaire, however warmly he might have sympathised with his benevolence, Luther would have had an aversion as deeply rooted as De Maistre's.† The service of God is a reverent service—the helping of mankind is a serious work—not to be transacted amid peals of ribald laughter. Down, unholy scorn, thou fiend of the pit! Not even the delicate and glancing arrows of raillery, shot from the bow of a skilled and cautious archer like Erasmus, could he admit to be in place in so solemn and sad an enterprise as reproving the errors and exposing the faults of the Church.

In another letter to the same correspondent, he has occasion to recur, in an interesting manner, to Erasmus. Spalatin—thanks to him!—had the art of drawing Luther out in correspondence by putting questions which his sincere and indefatigable friend was never too busy to answer. In this instance,

* De Wette, 47.

† Mr. John Morley's Essay on De Maistre.

however, Spalatin's demand had been so high that Luther was startled. Hitherto, he said, either his ability or his temerity had been equal to grappling with Spalatin's questions; but now, when he asked how the Sacred Books were to be studied, Luther answered that the prescribed task was far beyond his strength. He attempted an answer all the same.

He had never, he avows, been able to find a wholly satisfactory Scriptural guide for himself. Opinions on the subject varied widely. Erasmus avowed so high an estimate of St. Jerome, as to be willing to take him for the sole theologian of the Church. With fear and trembling—with the most stringent injunctions to Spalatin to keep the secret—he ventures to express dissent from this judgment, and to own his preference for St. Augustine. There is something pathetically suggestive in this trembling anxiety of Luther, in the beginning of 1518, to keep hidden from every one except his dearest and most trusted friend his audacity in holding an opinion not countenanced by Erasmus. He explains that it is as a theologian that he distrusts the latter, esteeming him beyond measure as a grammatical authority. He finds much in his books which is alien to the knowledge of Christ. But this, he says, he keeps to himself; he makes a point of publicly extolling Erasmus: because he is intensely unwilling to lend any support to those who are too dull to like, or too slothful to know, good literature, and are always in quest of occasion to slander it.

He earnestly impresses upon Spalatin that neither by study nor by genius, only by prayer and illumination of the Spirit, can the devout soul penetrate to the inner meaning of Holy Writ. There is but one expounder of Divine words, their Author. "Believe," he says, "a man who has learned by experience the truth of what he writes." He advises Spalatin, implicitly trusting God, and cherishing a mood of despairing humility, to read the Bible for himself from beginning to end. He, Spalatin, will find the epistles and commentaries of St. Jerome of much use in enabling him to get at the historical sense of Scripture; but for the true knowledge of Christ, and of the grace of God, St. Augustine and St. Ambrose were far more serviceable. He touches upon St. Jerome's objectionable tendency "to Origenise, that is to say, to allegorise." Among the works of St. Augustine, as best to begin with, he names the treatise on Spirit and Letter, the book against Julian, and that against the Pelagians.*

Call it mysticism, call it transcendentalism, call it inspiration, there lay avowedly, in the religion of Luther, something more than the light of intellect could give. Say, if you will, that this was illusion, fanaticism, presumption, monomania. Luther was prepared for the charge. To consummate culture, to perfect knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, to ethical science, to historical criticism, he deliberately denied any exclusive possession of a key to Divine Writ. The vision, the inner eye, the illumination of grace—

* De Wette, 53.

this was the essential thing. All the scholars in Europe—this was Luther's position—could not extract from Scripture Divine fire enough to kindle in one soul the inextinguishable spark of new birth.

But may not this doctrine be degraded into maid-of-all-work for the narrowest bigotry, the most abject and craven obscurantism? It may. And it was doubtless, in part at least, the consciousness of this that made Luther so sensitively alive to the risk of seeming to stand in opposition to Erasmus and to learning. With all the energy of his nature he took part with the young science and the reviving scholarship of his time. Alliance, co-operation, harmony between reformed learning and reformed religion, seemed to him the natural and obvious state of affairs. For one clear century this league remained unbroken, and Milton in the beginning of the seventeenth century, as Luther at the beginning of the sixteenth, had the assured conviction and consciousness that the cause of the Reformation was, universally, the cause of light. In society Luther spoke as an enthusiastic Humanist. But none the less did he hold, and on all necessary occasions avow, that intellectual illumination could not, either for the individual soul or for the Church, supersede the grace of God. In all those letters, however, which reveal to us Luther's conception of the new birth, there is not a word to suggest that the grace of God can be capriciously or arbitrarily bestowed. The duty of all duties to be performed by the awakened soul, without question either as to its conditions or its

possibility, is faith in the infinite willingness of God to save. "Despairing of yourself and humbly confessing as much to God, presume without scruple," he says to Spalatin,* "on His mercy. The man who distrusts the Divine mercy sins as much as the man who trusts in his own works." No room here for "limitation of the Atonement!"

In these letters we have occasional glimpses of terrestrial and every-day matters. In one of them he addresses his Prince in pithy, idiomatic German. Officialism, glib to promise, lax to perform, had contrived to neutralise the munificence—not very splendid, to begin with—of the Prince; and Luther must nudge his Highness gently on the subject. Would the gracious Frederick, having announced his kind intention to give his servant a garment, tell the courtly Pfeffinger to execute the commission? "He," the courtly Pfeffinger, "can spin good words fast enough, but good cloth won't come out of that: *er kann fast gute Wort spinnen, wird aber nit gut Tuch daraus.*"†

Having briefly and sportively dismissed the matter of the coat, which had evidently become a necessity, he proceeds to plead, in terms of great tenderness, with Frederick on behalf of Staupitz, who, for some cause or other, apparently for some words used inadvertently in a letter, had fallen out of the Prince's favour. Luther assures the latter, from his personal knowledge, that Staupitz's offence must have been unintentional, and that he entertained the warmest affection for his master.

* De Wette, 54. † *Ibid.*, 48.

He, Staupitz, had been heard by Luther to say that he knew not how he could have offended his most gracious lord, unless it were by loving him too well. The unaffected earnestness and indubitable friendliness of Martin's pleading for Staupitz in this letter form a significant comment upon that opposition which we found him offering to the proposal to make Staupitz a bishop. How perfect and how beautiful must the friendship have been that was equally well suited for *both* these occasions!

But Luther has not yet done with his pleadings for others. In the last part of his letter to Frederick he gives proof that he is a true patriot and a faithful subject, as well as a sincere friend. That he may do something, he says, to earn the raiment which the Prince has bestowed upon him, he will tell his Serene Highness what it is that lends currency to reports to his disadvantage, and alienates from him the hearts of his subjects. It is the suspicion that Frederick, having lately repealed one tax, intends to impose another and a heavier. Luther adjures him, in God's name, to forbear. The subject seems a delicate one on which to address a sovereign prince, and from all that we know of Frederick there were few points on which he was less likely to forget his duty than that of moderation in the imposition of taxes. Luther, however, going about as a monk among the common people, knew what they could bear and what they could not bear, and it was, on any showing, a brave thing in him to lay the fact of their complaining before Frederick. The almost startling

boldness of his representation, in so far as its matter is concerned, is in notable contrast to the humility of his tone and manner. He asks the Prince not to scorn the prayer of "a poor beggar" like himself. This humility in word and form, which strikes moderns as bordering on affectation or servility, combined with unfaltering firmness on the main point, will recur as a characteristic of Luther's correspondence. To judge only by his words, whether to Prince or to Pope, we might take him for the meekest and most pliant of men; but his spirit is high enough to admonish his sovereign, and he will not yield an atom of principle to conciliate the Pope.

If Frederick valued him, and if he was otherwise rich in enthusiastic friends, he was becoming more and more an object of animosity. The Dresden Paul Pry, who had stood at the door and longed to enter and spit in his face, was not alone. He tells Lange, in a letter of March, 1518,* that his adversaries promise the crowd a treat in the form of a public burning of the heretic Augustinian. When a proposal comes that he should set out for the Rhineland, to attend an important congress on conventual business at Heidelberg, his friends warn him against undertaking the journey, on the ground that he may be treacherously slain, or caught up and carried off to Rome.

* De Wette, 58.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WITTENBERG STUDENTS.

Among his enthusiastic—almost too enthusiastic—friends are to be classed the Wittenberg students. Luther was himself still too near the period of youth to look with frosty cynicism on its sudden-blooming, sudden-fading passions of admiration. His heart warmed at the thought that the young men of the University were on his side. Had he foreseen the successive bursts of enthusiastic welcome with which the ingenuous youth of Germany, represented at the Universities, have hailed each glittering or nebulous innovation, in philosophy, in religion, in politics, as it appeared, he might have entertained misgivings as to the accuracy of student discernment and the constancy of student faith. But he happily possessed no such prophetic power, and was gladdened by the vociferous acceptance which his teaching met with from the rising generation.

Tetzell, trying to persuade himself that the wheels of his chariot were still going round, and encouraged by the Frankfurt professors and Dominicans, had got counter-theses printed, and did his best to advertise them, with a view to the enlightenment of mankind

and the confusion of Martin Luther. Feeling, doubtless, that the enlightenment might be badly wanted in Wittenberg, he sent on from Halle a messenger supplied with his theses, for purchase by the students. No sooner, however, did the man make his appearance than he was surrounded by an excited crowd of youths, who exhibited the reverse of an hospitable spirit or respectful demeanour. Some copies of the document were, in the first few moments after he entered the town, bought in a manner which seems to have been pacific enough—a proof that there was no premeditation in the business. But the regular operation of supply and demand was not adapted to the situation. One cannot feel sure that Tetzell's man was paid with scrupulous accuracy even at first; and it is too certain that, as the crowd became more turbulent, the principles of political economy, both in relation to free trade and to protection, were set at nought. With hustling, with shouting, with loud laughter, fair trade, in the person of Tetzell's messenger, was overpowered, and the whole cartload of theses looted. As yet the succession of incidents appears to have been purely accidental; but some scintillation of method now showed itself in the wildness of the assailants. Proclamation was made that the booty would, on the same afternoon, be publicly burnt in the market-place, and all students and citizens were invited to witness the ceremony. The students, anxious, no doubt, to forestall interference by the authorities, were prompt. On the same day, at two o'clock, the theses of Tetzell illuminated the central

square of the town in a manner different from that which he had intended. Luther, it is almost superfluous to state, had not the smallest participation in this affair. He expressed his disapproval of it in the pulpit. Not the less, however, did he exult in the vehement and unanimous scorn with which the aspiring youth of Germany renounced Tetzell, and addressed themselves to the study of Holy Writ.*

And whatever may be said of the flightiness and the thirst for novelty of German students, it must be admitted that, amid the thousand-and-one affectations and enthusiasms that have dominated the Universities of Germany, the students of the Fatherland have remained constant in their devotion to Doctor Luther. His spirit reigned in Wittenberg, and the University bore the imprint of his character and activity. He was theological, but his theology, as he liked best to realise it, was simply the Bible rightly understood. And the Bible, be our theory about it what it may, unquestionably sets forth, more clearly, broadly, simply than any other book or books, the grand fact of the world's religion. The study of languages, the study of mathematics—all study that dealt with clear facts and certainties—he earnestly promoted. The weaving of abstractions—the building of word-edifices—he disliked in all instances, persuaded that no real knowledge, but only a pompous pretence of knowledge, was thus to be obtained. His position was thoroughly in agreement with that of modern science, with the difference that

* De Wette, 58.

he placed the authority of Scripture higher, and the authority of reason lower, than modern scientific men are prone to do. The students showed that they rightly understood him by manifesting a fervid enthusiasm for the Bible. Wittenberg became, under his auspices, a huge ant-hill of intellectual industry, the students creeping about in hundreds, each with his Bible under his arm.

CHAPTER V.

DANGER IN THE DISTANCE.

It was a sharp grief to him about this time that one whom he had learned to look upon as a congenial friend and ally suddenly mounted the colours of an enemy. Dr. Eck, of Ingoldstadt University, a man slightly under his own age, was well reputed among the learned, not only of Germany, but of Italy, and had made an unusually vivid and favourable impression upon Luther. In a letter to his friend Egranus, pastor in Zwickau, he pronounces Eck a man of erudition quickened by genius, and of genius fed by erudition. To Luther his friendship had been "most pleasant." And now, suddenly as a bolt from the blue, Eck launched a book against him. And such a book! Luther describes it as a bitter, violent, personal attack. No words were too black for the author in painting Luther. Such terms would have been severe if they had come from an enemy; coming from Eck, they "burned." He, Luther, was a heretic, seditious, inept; he was devoid of scholarship, he was rash, he was headlong, he was virulent, he was a Bohemian, he was a despiser of the Pope.* All this meant that one of the most

* De Wette, 59.

formidable opponents Luther ever encountered had taken the field against him.

On the last day of March, 1518, he writes to Staupitz, affectionately, trustingly, but with, perhaps, some faint cadence of suggestion that he fears his gentle friend may be taking alarm at the storm which begins to sing in the air. He says that his (Luther's) name has begun to have an evil savour for many. Even good people think that he is audaciously destructive of "*rosaria, coronas, psalteriola,*" and the rest of the decorative or mechanical apparatus of salvation. He, like St. Paul, was accused of saying, *Let us do evil that good may come.* It is noticeable that he does not rebut this charge. To do so would have been superfluous in writing to Staupitz. He remarks merely, with pathetic manliness, that he had not begun his work in desire for fame, and he would not pause in it for fear of infamy. "I have followed," he says, "the theology of Tauler. I teach that men should trust for salvation in Christ only, not in the merits or prayers of others, not in works of their own." The preference he accords to the Mystics and the Bible over the scholastic doctors irritates his opponents, he says, almost to frenzy. He does not want to be unfair to the schoolmen, but he will read them with judgment, not with the "closed eyes" of superstitious reverence. He will follow the apostolic rule, proving all things, holding fast what is good. He will neither reject nor accept propositions wholesale.*

John Tauler, named in this letter, was, perhaps, the

* De Wette, 60.

most memorable of those men known to history as the Mystic preachers and theologians who, during the three or four centuries preceding the Reformation, exerted great influence in Western Europe, principally in Germany, and in those wide regions watered by the Rhine, in which the Swiss, German, and Gallic races mix and melt into each other. Master Eckhart, Nicholas of Basle, and many others whose names have become mere sounds, were of the number. Two shades or colours—such is Nature's infinite abhorrence, under all circumstances, of uniformity—are distinguished, as marking a difference in spirit and practice between two sections of these Mystics—the Christian and the pantheistic. The best authorities seem to agree that there were some among the Mystics who leant to a pantheistic identification of God with Nature, and by consequence to laxity and indefiniteness in morals, claiming Divine right for the impulse of the moment, and making passion as devout as prayer. The irresistible drift of pantheism is to substitute some vehement prompting of nature for the precise determination of moral law. But the other sect or sort of Mystics, and conspicuously Tauler, did not efface the lines of demarcation between the human and the Divine, had no real affinity with philosophical pantheism, and professed to be unimpeachably orthodox. It is to these last Mystics that Luther refers as more to his mind than the schoolmen.

When we look into Tauler's sermons, we soon perceive what it was that Luther found in them. It is always of God's work, not of man's, that Tauler speaks.

Let us suppose, for example, that Luther, in his early monastic time, had just reached the end of a long series of ascetic exercises—that he had prayed till his throat was dry, and fasted till his heart was faint, and yet felt that he had climbed no nearer to God. Suppose that then he had chanced to open Tauler at the page where he describes the fruitless toil of those who labour for salvation in their own way, who suffer long and much to no profit, because "they take hold of all things by the wrong end." "They gain little grace," says Tauler, "from all their pain, because they are building upon stones of their own laying, whether it be penance or abstinence, or prayer or meditation. . . . God hath fixed it in His purpose that He will reward nothing but His own works. In the kingdom of Heaven He will crown nothing to all eternity but His works, and not thine. What He has not wrought in thee He takes no account of."

That is enough. Were we to read volumes of Tauler, we could not find a more explicit unveiling of the secret of his influence upon Luther. The quoted words would have been accepted by him in spirit and in letter, with clearest acquiescence of brain and purest fervency of heart, as an expression of his own belief. It is plain, also, that he expects Staupitz to agree with him in regarding Tauler as orthodox. At this time he was firmly persuaded that, in essentials, the Church was on his side. There might be misunderstanding, serious misunderstanding, between the ecclesiastical authorities and himself on the subject of Indulgences;

but it had not yet dawned upon him that the Church could blame him for magnifying the part of the Divine Spirit in the salvation of the soul. He held, therefore, that those who accused him of heresy did injustice to the Church as well as to him.

To some extent, however, he was reckoning without his host. The Church had not pronounced Tauler a heretic, but he was not a man after her heart. A sure instinct had told the mediæval Church that the Mystics, whatever their shade, were to be looked on with suspicion. If they deified Nature, and expatiated in a wild pantheistic freedom—whatever was intensely believed being taken for Divine truth, and whatever was passionately enjoyed being taken for innocent pleasure—they could dispense with her ministrations. If, on the other hand, their talk was not of Nature, but of grace —if they dwelt upon the vision of God in Christ, if salvation was with them the immediate contact and reconcilement of the human spirit and the Divine Spirit — then also they would set small store by priestly mediation. When occasion served, the Church dealt summarily with the Mystics. Tauler lived, but Nicholas, whom Tauler revered as a man of God, died for heresy. Once more we are reminded, by the history of the Mystics, of that sweeping misconception which fancies that Protestantism is a modern thing, a birth of the sixteenth century. Protestantism in the sense of a semi-articulate yearning, groaning, struggling—Protestantism as an opposition to the death to that colossal power which held in one hand the keys

of heaven, and in the other a lighted faggot—had existed for long centuries before Luther. In the blood-stained ruins of Albigensian cottages—in the Lollard fires of England—in the ashes of Nicholas, of Huss, of Savonarola—the presence of this Protestantism makes itself known. All spiritual movement in Europe during those centuries was undertaken at the risk of death by torment. So strangely, so inconceivably, had the fair brow of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, been knit and corrugated into the scowl of a persecuting Fury.

It is necessary to add that, though Tauler was influential upon Luther in respect of personal development at a critical juncture in his spiritual history, the two men were of different types. In the make of his mind, Luther was not Taulerian, but Pauline; not a Mystic, arrayed in soft, floating draperies of sentiment and fantasy, but a ruggedly practical thinker and man, his foot planted on the granite of fact.

This letter to Staupitz is a clear indication that Luther began to perceive that Eck was not the only man likely to challenge his theology. He saw danger looming in the direction of Rome.

CHAPTER VI.

HOLIDAY-MAKING—HEIDELBERG.

But bleak March is ended. April with its sunny showers has come. Martin, though lean, pale, and worn with thought, is an enthusiastic pedestrian, and loves the breath of the woods in spring. To that Heidelberg Conference of which we have had some hinted announcement he will go. Anxious friends may shake their heads, talk of lions and wolves in the way, but he refuses to listen. He will see how the vines sprout on the banks of the Rhine. He has the prospect of meeting Staupitz, Lange, and other dear friends, and may probably perform part of the journey in company with the latter. April is about twelve days old when he is actually on the road, his back to Wittenberg and the shivering Elbe, his face towards Heidelberg and the sunny Rhine.

But before accompanying him on his way we shall have a look at a wise little letter which he sends to his friend Egranus, the Zwickau pastor. Egranus, who was a vivacious member of the reforming party, had got into controversy about St. Anne, and now asked Luther to pronounce an opinion on the position he had taken up. Martin's reply is conspicuously moderate. He pointedly praises Egranus for his profession of

willingness to submit the matter in dispute to the judgment of the Church, and first of all to that of his ordinary. "In the Church of God," he says, "it behoves us to speak even the truth with tremulous discretion."* Admirable advice! Pathetically admirable from the pen of Martin Luther. "It is a good divine," says wise Shakespeare, "that follows his own instructions; I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching." If, however, we believe that he wrote in simple honesty to his friend Egranus—if he did fully appreciate the duty of speaking the truth "with fear"—we are bound in charity to presume that he would not have become fearless, nay fiery, in speech—that he would not have cast moderation to the winds and made conscience of vehemence—if he had not been firmly convinced that the occasion was grave enough to make the reversal of all ordinary rules a duty. For the rest, he tells Egranus that he agrees with him in his views of the Saints, but hints at the same time that a judgment pronounced by Luther in his favour is not likely to do him much good. The learned will not think Luther learned enough to speak with authority; the priest party will say that Egranus has gone for vindication to a heretic as bad as himself—the kettle asking the pot for a testimonial to its immaculate whiteness. The adversaries, he says, hate him more than they hate Egranus. But he bespeaks long-suffering for them in the name of the Saviour who bears the sins of all, and in consideration also that they

* *Vera etiam loqui cum timore oportet in ecclesiâ Dei.*—De Wette, 61.

have a common human nature with the men they assail. "No despairing of them; no presumptuous confidence of our always being and continuing right; they and we are one bone and one flesh."

Leaving Egranus to ponder this monition to temperate speech, addressed to him by the most fiery disputant in polemical history, we return, with satisfaction, to the Heidelberg journey. It may be reasonably inferred from the sequel that Luther's friends advised him to make some provision in the way of conveyance; but he determined to go afoot. On the fifteenth of April, 1518, we find him at Coburg. It is five in the afternoon, and he sits down to write to Spalatin. Though in good spirits, he is almost dead-beat with the fatigue of the journey. And no wonder. He has been but four or, at the utmost, five days on the road, and he must have traversed about one hundred and twenty-five miles. For a man of books, who of late has had much study and little exercise, five days of continuous ascent and descent, on the weary forest roads of Central Germany, must have sternly taxed the physical energies. He confesses to having sinned in insisting upon making the journey on foot; but so shrewdly has he suffered, so thoroughly has he been crushed and brought to repentance, that he may hope, he says, for pardon even without letters of Indulgence. The vehicles, he adds, were all full—a graphic touch which gives one the idea of wistful glances backward and listenings for the sound of wheels, with imploring inquiries as to whether room

could not be made for a poor wayfarer and his guide, and inexorable shakings of the head by way of reply. He was accompanied by a single attendant, the professional guide of a period when long journeys on foot were common, and when the traveller wanted piloting along forest roads and through difficult passes in the hills.

He jots down a point or two from his recollections of the way which will, he knows, interest Spalatin. At a place called Judenbach he had come across Pfeffinger, Frederick's counsellor and purse-holder, the same whose fine-spun words, by way of succedaneum for broadcloth, had not been found effectual against the Elbe winds in winter. Martin had now, he tells Spalatin, enjoyed the sweet solace in his weariness of making Pfeffinger "shell out." Not only for himself and his guide, but for three travellers who had hooked on to them on the way, with others to a total of ten, did our ingenious Doctor contrive to make the rich courtier defray hotel expenses. "You know how I like, if I can anyhow manage it, to quarter myself on the rich and make their pockets lighter by a few coins." Spalatin would relish this joke against Pfeffinger, and we may be pretty sure that Frederick would have a hint of it. At Weissenfels the pastor, a Wittenberg Master of Arts, and, of course, familiar with his face and reputation, though not a personal acquaintance, recognised him, and celebrated his transit with due emphasis of hospitality.

From Coburg he pushed on, still on foot, into Bavaria, and in a day or two reached Würzburg.

Here he met several of his Order on their way to Heidelberg, and among them his old friend, Lange, of Erfurth. Having had far too much walking, he was glad to perform what remained of the journey in a vehicle with a party of his friends; and thus, on the 21st of April, he entered Heidelberg.

At this celebrated town, situated near the junction of two world-famous rivers, the Neckar and the Rhine, his experiences were all delightful. Wolfgang, the Prince Palatine, received him with cordiality, and invited him to the Castle along with Staupitz and Lange. They were entertained by the Prince himself and distinguished personages of the Court. They expatiated in jocund talk, ate and drank of the best, and were led round the wonders and splendours, the glittering implements of war and cunning enchantments, which *regale illud et plane illustrissimum castrum*—that royal and most illustrious castle—had to show. Luther enjoyed it all like a great, happy schoolboy. The courtiers were evidently studious to gratify a man so deeply honoured by their master. One high functionary, for example, James Simler by name, who seems to have held some secretarial or other appointment, requiring him to inspect the letters of introduction to the Prince which strangers carried with them, found or made occasion to let Luther know the interesting fact that something like a sensation had been produced at Court by the letter he had brought from Frederick. "*Ihr habt bei Gott*," whispered the deft courtier to Luther in a Neckar dialect, which tickled his north country ears with a sense of

comic piquancy, "*einen kystlichen Credenz.*" "By Jove, Doctor, that was a stunning introduction of yours!" * Simler understood his business.

Our brave monk had enjoyed singularly little of this sort of thing in the course of his life, and we must be cold-natured if we have no sympathy with his enjoyment.

The main business to be transacted at this gathering of the Augustinian Order at Heidelberg was the election of officers. Staupitz resumed the post of General Vicar. Luther's judiciousness and decision in displacing the Prior of Erfurth and substituting Lange received practical recognition of a striking kind by the election of the latter to be Provincial Vicar.

He was himself received with courtesy and respectfulness, but without marked enthusiasm either of friends or foes. No one seems to have shown much fear of him as a heretic, but it does not appear that there was any general disposition to accept his theology. A public disputation took place on the subject; his opponents argued acutely and fairly; there was not much change of opinion effected on either side. Some advantage, however, remained with Luther. Several minds had derived an impression from his words too deep to be effaced. John Brenz and Martin Bucer, names that reappear in the history of the Reformation, now first ranged themselves under his banner. His old friends and teachers of the Erfurth University were among his determined, though not ill-humoured, antagonists. "To the Erfurthians," he told Spalatin,

* De Wette, 65.

"my theology is *Bis mortem crambe*," an expression descriptive of concentrated contemptibility of nonsense which I do not know how to translate into English. Dr. Jodocus, in particular—the thrice respectable Trutvetter of Eisenach—stood stiffly upon the old ways. This was more than Luther quite expected. Piqued by the sweeping, peremptory, almost contemptuous opposition of one at whose feet he had sat, and whose knowledge both of theology and of logic he believed to be considerable, he wrote to Trutvetter with much carefulness and with earnest affection, assuring his old master that under no circumstances could he apply to him acrimonious or disdainful terms. He did not thus, he said, take vengeance even upon those who had painted him to the people as a heretic, a lunatic, a man possessed by a legion of devils. Going, then, to the heart of the matter—salvation by grace and not by works—he pressed it upon his correspondent that he was neither the inventor nor the sole assertor of this doctrine, mentioning a number of persons, whose theological and logical accomplishments Trutvetter could not dispute, who agreed with him. It is noticeable that he treats it as a matter of course that Trutvetter believes the Church to stand in need of reform. The only question he looks upon as practically open is that of the extent to which reform must be carried. He utters words which make the letter a most important manifesto of his views as a reformer at this initial stage in his public career. "I simply believe"—such is his deliberate and emphatic form of expression—"that it is impossible for the Church

to be reformed unless canons, decretals, scholastic theology, philosophy, logic, as at present accepted, are torn up by the very roots (*funditus eradicentur*) and other studies put in their place." *

This, in truth, is what our experience of Luther would lead us to anticipate. Prepared to yield in minor matters—prepared, as he sufficiently indicates in other parts of this letter, to be instructed as to the exercise of Church discipline and the legitimate and non-legitimate dispensation of Indulgence—he will not, on the question of salvation by grace, yield an inch to buy his life. He takes occasion to remind Trutvetter that he, Luther, had received from his lips the doctrine that the canonical books of Scripture alone regulate faith, all others being subjected to the test of our own understanding. Turning to a more personal matter he expresses sheer and sad amazement that his old master should think it possible that "all human sense had perished within him" so completely as to make him capable of urging the students to burn Tetzell's theses; and concludes with an entreaty that Trutvetter will say right out whatever he may feel or think to his disadvantage, confident that it will be taken in good part. "I neither will nor can be made bitter against thee, witness God and my conscience."

The letter we have been considering was written by him at Erfurth, on the 9th of May, in a pause of his return journey to Wittenberg. He succeeded also in obtaining a personal interview with his old preceptor,

* De Wette, 64.

and entering into earnest discussion with him. "I brought it at last so far," says Luther, "that he understood that he could neither establish his own position nor confute mine." But he admits to Spalatin that he has no hope of convincing those old scholastics. They will stick to their wire-drawings and hair-splittings (*distinctiunculis*). They confess, however, that their abstractions have no authority beyond that of natural reason, "as they call it." And now, as always—this the friends of Luther must clearly admit—he spurns the authority of natural reason in the sphere of faith. "Reason, in matters of religion, is," he says, "nothing else than chaos and darkness for us who preach no other light than Jesus Christ."

Another of those lingering swallows of the mediæval summer—those flickering lights of expiring scholasticism—whom Luther had revered in his student days at Erfurth, was Bartholomew Arnold, of Usingen. With him also he had close argumentative talk as they sat together in the same conveyance on their way back from Heidelberg. "But I know not if I did any good," he says; "I left him sunk in thought and wonderment —*cogitabundum et mirabundum reliqui*." "So great a matter is it," he proceeds, "to have grown old in evil opinions." But the young mind of Germany rings true to the Gospel note, and a beautiful hope (*eximia spes*) arises within him that, as the disciples of Christ, repelled by the Jews, turned to the Gentiles, so the pure theology, rejected by opinionated old men, may betake itself to youth.

And so this Heidelberg excursion, which has occupied a happy month in the spring of 1518—made up of the better halves of April and May—came auspiciously to an end. In its beginning, though he took things bravely, the long walk from Wittenberg to Coburg bore hard upon him. The woods, in their universal glimmer of golden green, would, no doubt, be lovely, but a man who for months had been sedentary, as he dragged himself, mile after mile, up the sides of the Thuringian hills, would be too footsore to enjoy them. From the hour when he reached Würzburg, and ensconced himself in the car, waggon, chariot, or whatever the travelling vehicle of the period might be, with Lange and other friends, he had known no evil. Pleasant experiences had streamed in upon him. His return had been what high-flying journalists call an ovation. "I came back in a chariot," he gaily says, "who had trudged forth on foot." The Nuremberg men, the Erfurth men (in spite of his theological button-holding), the Eisleben men, had been proud of his company in their respective conveyances. These last, mindful, no doubt, that he had been an Eisleben baby, insisted upon going out of their way and escorting him to Wittenberg. Sweetest of the sweet are fame and welcome from the town where one was born. Martin was glad of heart. "I was all right the whole of the way, and my meat and drink agreed with me wonderfully, so that people say I am more portly and fat than before."*

* De Wette, 65.

This ride of Doctor Luther's through the Highlands of Central Germany, their woods now all in a blaze of May foliage, is among the brightest incidents in his life. One cannot help fancying that the Eisleben men, when they got home, would have a word or two to say to John and Margaret Luther about their son.

CHAPTER VII.

LUTHER TO THE POPE.

But the brief, bright holiday is over. Luther is again in Wittenberg, near the murmurous Elbe, whose deliberate motion is emblematic of steady, unostentatious work. He has much to do, and he girds himself to do it. He puts the final touches to his treatise, explanatory and defensive, on the Theses, and in the closing days of May it is ready.

Naturally he attached great importance to this performance. For him the theological and ecclesiastical aspects of the question of Indulgences were of supreme interest; and in this work he investigates the whole subject in a very able and, for practical purposes, an exhaustive manner. But it had not a tenth part of the effect on his contemporaries which was produced by the original rough-hewn Theses, and from the view-point of history it is, comparatively, of slight moment. It was not because of their theological perfection that the Theses were powerful, but because they set forth, with such vivid energy that the world could not but look up and see, a few great spiritual principles and perennial moral truths. Of these Europe recognised Luther as the champion; and it added immensely to the dramatic impressiveness of his

demonstration that Europe recognised the Pope as the representative of the opposite cause. The precise theological merits of the dispute, as between the monk and the Pope, had little interest for the mass of mankind even then, and could not possibly be made to interest the mass of mankind now.

The main historical significance of the treatise on the Theses, as distinguished from the Theses themselves, consists in this—that it is Luther's deliberate and respectful appeal to the Pope. The Theses had come from a heart hot with indignation and amazement. They might well contain words fitted to startle those for whom reverence for the Pope was the main part of religion. Their suddenness was their apology; but this might rightly have been held to be a limping apology if no attempt were made to supplement them. In the explanatory and defensive work Luther makes use, no doubt, of strong language. But he cannot with any show of fairness be represented as merely throwing out rebellious and insolent charges against the Church or the Pope. He writes as one bound to vindicate the doctrine he has preached; he writes as a member and minister of the Church of which the Pope is the head. On these grounds — on all conceivable grounds—he was entitled to have the book taken up and examined by the Pope with patient friendliness and candid consideration.

Nor could he have laid his treatise at the feet of his ecclesiastical superiors with more formal or deferential courtesy than he actually made use of. He sent it to

the Bishop of Brandenburgh, accompanied by a letter in which he dwelt on the necessity under which he had lain to produce the Theses; insisted upon the point of their having been intended for discussion, some having been positively at variance with his own belief; and said that even the book now sent consisted not of propositions dogmatically asserted, but of positions intended for discussion.

On the 30th of May he wrote two letters on the subject, one to Staupitz, the other to the Pope. Staupitz he asked to present the treatise to Leo, and to speak good words on its behalf, in counteraction of his malignant enemies. His letter to the Pope deserves our best attention.

An evil report, he begins by observing, has been carried of him to the ears of Leo. He has been represented as an enemy of the Church. He has been called heretic and apostate. But he remains placid and unmoved in the fastness of a good conscience.

He then lays before the Pontiff a plain statement of what he has done. We are, of course, familiar with the facts adduced—the chief of them being the offensive and extravagant preaching of Indulgences, turning the authority of the Church into a scandal or a laughing-stock, filling uninstructed minds with the most pernicious and impious errors. The flagitious business, he urges, had been carried on, not only by word of mouth, but by the dissemination of handbooks, which could be produced in proof of what he said.

With these things under his eyes, he had bethought

him what he ought to do. His motive seemed to him to be zeal for Christ—if it is alleged to have been the aggressive ardour of a young man he cares not to dispute the point. He had written privately to his ecclesiastical superiors. Nothing came of that. The idea then occurred to him of having recourse to the ancient, approved, and academical practice of public disputation. He submits that, in virtue of his position, as having received from his University the degree of Master in Theology, he possessed an unimpeachable right to invite disputation on the vexed and complicated question of Indulgences. Hence the Theses, posted on the church-door, which had raised all this conflagration.

The manner in which the Theses had spread abroad to the ends of the earth had been, he says, to him a perfect miracle. Had he foreseen what took place, he would have moulded his propositions in various respects differently. But what was now to be done? It was beyond his power to withdraw the Theses from circulation. The best course seemed to be to put forth an expository, elucidative, supplementary, and defensive comment upon the propositions. This he had done; the treatise which he now placed before the most blessed Father was the result. Those who had misunderstood him, those whom he had scandalised, might now, if they meant to do him justice, consider his *Solutions* of their difficulties. They would see with what unaffected simplicity he maintained his allegiance to the authority of the Church, how reverently he respected the Power of the Keys, how iniquitously false

had been the charges of heresy and rebellion hurled against him by his adversaries.

In conclusion, all the enthusiasm of affection and devotion with which, from childhood, he had regarded the Father of Christendom seems to mount to his lip, and to break forth in a passion and paroxysm of willingness to submit to the judgment of Leo. "Give me life," he cries, "give me death, bid me advance, bid me retreat; approve, reprove, according to your pleasure. Thy voice I shall acknowledge as the voice of Christ ruling in thee, speaking in thee. If I have deserved death, I shall not refuse to die. For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: who is blessed for ever. Amen."

Such, in its essence and main historical purport, was the celebrated letter in which Martin first addressed the Pope. D'Aubigné, and after him the more careful Köstlin, find in it an express and courageous refusal on Luther's part to retract. This forces them to resort to argumentative expedients with a view to soften or explain away the unlimited offer to submit and retract, if the Pope bids him, with which Luther concludes the letter. In point of fact, however, if he says in one paragraph that he cannot recant, and in another that he is prepared, if the Pope so requires, to recant, he simply and flatly contradicts himself. The head of the letter, in that case, eats the tail, or the tail the head —which you will. A perfect consistency, theoretic and practical, in the sayings and doings of Luther I should be the last to attempt to make out; but abrupt and obvious

self-contradiction like this is surely improbable in a man of acknowledged skill in making his meaning plain and of unchallenged intrepidity. The difficulty is easily and completely removed if we suppose him to use the Latin word *revoco* in one sense in one place and in another sense in another, both senses being equally natural, and their varying use by Luther being quite compatible with ingenuousness. He cannot recall the Theses, he says: to wit, from publication. Their diffusion—their running from end to end of Europe like wildfire—has been in his eyes a miracle; he cannot counteract it by any effort at recall. But he will explain; he will send the Solutions in the track of the Theses. And if the Pope, standing in the place of Christ, bids him retract anything in what, on the whole subject of Indulgences, he has been teaching, he promises to obey. Certain, at all events, it is that a more comprehensive, emphatic, or unqualified profession of willingness to submit to the Pope than that which closes this letter of Luther's cannot be expressed in language. I freely paraphrased it just now in English. But it tells far better in the original: *Quare, beatissime Pater, prostratum me pedibus tuæ beatitudinis offero, cum omnibus quæ sum et habeo; vivifica, occide, voca, revoca, approba, reproba, ut placuerit. Vocem tuam, vocem Christi, in te præsidentis et loquentis, agnoscam. Si mortem merui, mori non recusabo.**

The difficulty of an apparent self-contradiction on Luther's part is thus disposed of. But does not that

* De Wette, 68.

difficulty take itself away only to leave us confronted with what may appear to many the far more serious difficulty of a promise of implicit submission made by Luther to the Pope? For it can with no show of reasonableness be maintained that the promise was kept. An extremely plausible case might be made out by a deft logician in proof that Luther's expressions antagonistic to the Pope, in sermon, in treatise, in letter, occurring even *before* the date of this epistle to Leo, are irreconcilable with the hypothesis of his entire sincerity in its passionately Popish ending. But that *after* despatching this letter, and not very long after doing so, he became vehemently hostile to the Pope, requires no proof because it admits of no question. In subsequent years he looked back with feelings of bitter self-reproach upon what he considered the besotted Popery of this letter. As yet the illusion with which the Pope had been, for him, encompassed since his childhood was unbroken. He could still persuade himself that Leo might prove to be the friend of all the friends of God, the head of a kingdom existing for no other cause but to enshrine the truth. The time was at hand when this state of mind passed away,—and for ever. His mind was in a state of constant growth, of rapid change. New experiences were pouring in upon him, creating new knowledge and prompting to new courses of action. On the grand truth of salvation by grace he had, in all essentials, attained to the fulness of his belief. In the new dawn the clouds had lifted from his soul, and many companies of angels had come in,

praising God and initiating heaven. But though, in his letters and sermons, indications had not been absent of a perception that many things in the Church-system and popular religion of Christendom would require alteration before scope could be found for this truth of truths, he had not, at the date of this first letter to Leo, formed any idea of the extent to which the preaching of it would bring him into conflict with the recognised authorities of Christendom. True, he glowed with reforming zeal; but why should he harbour the ungenerous thought that the Pope must be less animated by a desire for reform than himself? Was God's truth a peculiar possession of his? St. Augustine, St. Bernhard, St. Thomas himself, in his loftiest and wisest mood—all the most majestic voices of the Church—spoke, he was inflexibly convinced, on his side. He took it for granted that the Pope would hear him impartially; and since he most firmly believed that, in the main, he had been doing God's work, he took it for granted that the Pope's decision would be in his favour. This state of mind evinced a very considerable amount of misapprehension as to his position in relation to Leo; but it enabled him to retain perfect sincerity while expressing, with the emotional fervour germane to the temperament of genius, his will and purpose to accept the decision of the Pope.

Does a promise to accept the decision of a judge carry with it, as a kind of suppressed premiss, the stipulation that his judgment shall be righteous—or at least shall approximate in some reasonable degree to

righteousness? Luther did not fulfil the promise made to Leo. He did not accept Leo's voice as the voice of Christ. Waiving all further defence of the fact, we cannot do better than consider, as we shall have opportunity for doing presently, whether the judicial office was in this case undertaken, or performed, by the Pope with any reasonable show of fairness, or whether it was entered upon with contemptuous disregard of all pretence at fairness. In extreme cases ordinary rules are suspended. No rule can be more express, none can be more correctly defined as a categorical imperative, than that which binds a soldier to obey the word of command. But the officer who, at the siege of Glatz in the last century, deliberately disobeyed his military superiors, and went on firing after the fortress had been surrendered, would, I suppose, be considered a model of soldierly duty. The Governor had turned traitor; the surrender was a piece of treacherous poltroonery; and that decisive fact absolved Major Unruh, the officer in question, from all obligation to obey him. If the conviction should be forced upon Luther that his relation to the Pope was that of a faithful officer to a traitorous commander, then we need not be surprised though the paroxysm of his disenchanted wrath should prove a counterpart to the paroxysm of loyalty, affection, submission, and trust with which his first letter to the Pope concludes.

The letter goes on its way to Rome. We shall not accompany it, but remain behind with Luther.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT WITTENBERG IN 1518—ADVENT OF MELANCHTHON—LUTHER'S RELATION TO RATIONALISM.

If unimpeded, unconstrained activity is the most potent and comprehensive of pleasures, Luther, in those months of 1518, between his return from Heidelberg, which we have seen, and his departure for Augsburg, which we are soon to see, must have been a happy man. Not only was he in a state of perpetual activity, but he was inspired with ardent enthusiasm in his various occupations. They were imbued with one spirit, and subserved one august cause. Every day made him more conscious that he was the leader of a party—that devout and open-minded Germans began to look up to him—that he was responsible for the faith and practice of an ever-widening circle of men.

The part of leader was one to which he took kindly, his natural aptitude for it being great. The Spalatins, the Langes, the Staupitzes, in short, all his friends, seem to have discerned in his bearing and accents from the first something of the attributes of a king. Of royal trappings the penniless monk had none, but the duties of the royal leader he performed as few could. His eye swept a wide horizon, and he was always ready, at the

critical moment, with the necessary word, the indispensable action. His kingship was the pure kingship of mind —the authority he wielded being derived solely from the influence he exercised upon thought, belief, opinion. He preached and lectured almost without intermission, sending much of what he spoke to congregations or students to be poured forth upon a larger audience through the press. With the instinct of a leader, he kept himself well in touch with his followers. As each new phase in his conflict with the Papacy unfolded itself, he prepared his party for it, and set himself in the fitting attitude in relation to it. He combined a spiritual enthusiasm allying him to Mystics of the school of Tauler with a vigilant wakefulness, a shrewd appreciation of facts, a keen perception of the means necessary to ends, which remind us of his Saxon blood and his kinship with the soldier-saints of Cromwell. He believed in no modern miracle but the miracle of grace. His enemies found it hard to get the wind of him. At the right moment he nudged Spalatin; Spalatin nudged the Elector; and thus it came about that Cardinals and Popes found Monk Martin much more formidable than he looked.

Be the delights of high-strung activity, however, as intense as they may, it would be unsatisfactory to know that Luther had at this time no relaxation, no recreation, except such as was derived from variety of employment. There were a few elements of more acute and positive pleasure in his lot. He was in the midst of sympathetic friends, and had ample opportunities of social converse.

If his ability to contribute creature comforts, for the enlivenment of his friends, was inexorably limited by the laws of conventual discipline, he could tell the obsequious Spalatin to bring from the Castle a modest supply of wine which he and a few more of Luther's friends might consume in his company. Martin was fond of social converse, distinguishing himself by genial sportiveness and cordial merriment. The flute, we may be sure, would not be in abeyance. There are traces of attempts by sour zealots of the Popish faction to set afloat reports to his disadvantage, based on his jocund sociality, as if he were of wine-bibbing and revelling propensities. The exceptional purity—the moral radiancy—of his life from boyhood upwards entitled and enabled him to treat such malevolent fictions with contempt. The fact is that, in attaining maturity of religious faith and life, his manhood generally had become healthful and strong. In the simple festivities of his Wittenberg circle, as well as in graphic touches and allusions scattered up and down the letters written during the Heidelberg excursion, we discern evidence of his having risen above the sickly sanctities of monasticism, and begun to appreciate the natural joys of life.

It was an inexpressible refreshment and exhilaration to Luther this summer when a slender, boy-like creature of twenty-one, with the tiniest of persons, but crag-like elevation of brow and eloquent eyes, appeared in Wittenberg, mounted the rostrum, and, before he descended, convinced an amazed and enchanted audience that fame

and Reuchlin had not lied, but that an almost preternatural amount of genius, Greek, scholarly aspiration, and Christian faith and hope, stood before them in the boy-like form of Melanchthon. How the black eyes of Luther must have sparkled as the stripling's address went on! How profound must have been the joy of Luther's heart when he discerned that the speaker, though glowing with enthusiasm for Greek and all humane learning, yet reserved the deepest passion of his soul for that new-old Gospel of salvation by grace of which Wittenberg was becoming the Jerusalem and Luther the prophet!

The friendship that arose between Luther and Melanchthon is one of those things on which the mind loves to linger. Finer in the quality of his erudition, more elegantly correct and melodious in the golden flow of his speech, than Luther, Melanchthon recognised without a moment's hesitation that the rugged Saxon was the kinglier of the two. All that art could do, all that education and scholarship could effect, was, he instinctively felt, of no account in comparison with the heaven-derived energy and original force of the son of the Mansfeld miner. The strong affections of Luther, on the other hand, seemed to find their special object in tiny Philip, so gifted, so fragile, and to enfold him in an intense embrace. Content himself with fare and lodging almost as rude as the stones and heaths of ancestral Möhra, he became thoughtfully solicitous as a woman when he reflected on the "*teneritudo*"—the feminine delicacy and frailty—of Philip. That he should himself

do the work of six men in supreme indifference to pay of any kind was, in his eyes, seemly and proper; but he spoke up sharply on behalf of Philip, resolute that the wind should not visit his cheek too roughly, peremptory that, in bleak Wittenberg, he should have such appointments as might secure his health and comfort. Parsimonious Pfeffingers, whose unsatisfactoriness in the matter of coats may serve as a hint that they were not too punctual or liberal in the payment of salaries, if they aired their parsimony at the expense of Philip, had Martin to reckon with. The friendship of Luther and Melanchthon sprang, as is so often the case with true love, into fulness of life and force at first sight. From that time Luther fronted all hardship, endured all toil, encountered all danger, with the sense and solace of companionship.

Everything conspired to render the advent of Melanchthon in Wittenberg an occasion for almost tumultuous joy to Luther. The wondrous boy was not only a dear personal friend, but a most effective ally in theology, and an invaluable auxiliary in all university matters. We are not to forget—if we would apprehend the breadth of Luther's sympathies, the width of his intellectual glance—that his earnestness and activity as a reformer of the Church were combined with strenuous energy as a liberal professor. He was the ruling spirit in the University, ardently concerned in its prosperity, and in its loyalty to that new order which, in letters as in theology, he zealously strove to introduce. His ascendency was owned by his

fellow professors, and it was unmistakably through his influence that the grey humdrum town, seated on its drowsy sand-flats beside its slumbrous river, was being turned into a buzzing hive of spiritual industry, to which ardent youth wended its way from all the corners of Germany. The very blazon and gonfalon of the new learning was Greek. The unreasoning devotees of that Church system which rested fundamentally on the Latin Bible and the Latin language regarded Greek learning with inexorable suspicion and dislike. The name of Melanchthon which for pure excellence of Greek scholarship was on a level with that of Erasmus, formed a guarantee to Europe that Wittenberg, the seat of the religious reformation, was a focal point also of the new critical erudition, the new movement in human letters and general culture. All this was fitted to afford the liveliest satisfaction to Luther.

But one is under absolute compulsion to guard modern readers against misconception touching the nature and extent of Luther's intellectual liberalism. In common with the great representative minds of his age—in common with the whole genius and tendency of the sixteenth century—he yearned towards *facts*. This statement is, indeed, comprehensive, but it is not, on that account, vague. In all departments the men of the sixteenth century showed a consuming thirst for facts. Facts in learning, not the glosses and guesses of commentators, but the exact text of the ancient writings, accurately interpreted; facts in science, not perpetual repetition of what had been achieved by Aristotle, but

fresh and frank observation of nature, and inquisition into nature; facts in theology, not the speculations of schoolmen, not the unproved assumptions and problematical benedictions of priests, not anything doubtful or disputable, but the inspired Word of God. On this broad and simple basis of appeal to fact, in contradistinction to theory and speculation, Luther and Bacon, it has been well said, occupied a common platform.

But the moment we pass beyond this first characteristic of Luther's modernism we must beware of going astray. He demanded freedom in the investigation of all facts: but he distinguished with incisive sharpness between respective provinces of fact. In the natural province, the authority of observation and of reason in determining what was fact admitted of no appeal. In the spiritual province—the province of things unseen and eternal—the authority in determining what was fact belonged to Revelation alone. With angry insistence, Luther repelled what he would have styled the insolent pride of human opinion attempting to declare, in either province—the visible world or the invisible—what *ought* to be fact, what it might be extremely pleasant to regard as fact, instead of simply ascertaining what *is* fact. The adder's bite, the cancer's gnawing pain, may be disagreeable things; but they are facts: to apologise for them, to spin excuses, on behalf of God and nature, for producing them, this, all sane men being witnesses, is pedantic folly. And so, Luther held, it is with facts warranted

by Revelation. The only relevant question to be asked concerning them is whether they are facts or are not.

We must frankly face the truth on this point. Liberty, in every form that deserves the name, owes an inestimable debt to Luther. He will take high rank, to all time, among those who set free the mind of Europe. But he was mainly unconscious of what he did—one of God's blind horses, to use words of his which we have already quoted. He never announced himself as the apostle or as the iconoclast of reason. He spurned the claim of Trutvetter and the Erfurth scholastics to prop their Church system with buttresses reared by natural reason. In the theological province reason was, for him, as we have seen, the confusion of chaos and the blackness of night.* When Spalatin wrote inquiring whether and in how far the science of logic was of use in theology, he expressly denied that it had any use at all, except, perhaps, as a gymnastic for young minds. "You ask how far I think dialectics of use to the theologian. Sooth to say, I see not how, to the true theologian, dialectics can fail to be noxious rather than beneficial. Be it, if you like, that there is some use in the play, or the exercise, thus afforded to young wits: nevertheless, in dealing with sacred literature, where mere faith and supernal illustration are looked for, the whole apparatus of syllogism must be left outside the door, not otherwise than Abraham, when he went to sacrfice, left the lads with the asses."† He rejoiced

* *Chaos tenebrarum.*—De Wette, 65.

† *Cæterum quæris, quatenus utilem dialecticen arbitrer theologo: ego*

when the study of ethics was discountenanced in the Wittenberg University. "Theology is to ethics," he says, "what the lamb is to the wolf."* Oh, Doctor, we moderns are almost ashamed of you! In one word, he put aside, as mere impertinence and irrelevancy, all attempts to supplement, or even, except within rigid limits, to elaborate, systematise, and develop God's facts, as stated in the Bible, by the natural intimations of conscience, or the natural illumination of reason. He fretted over the perpetual outpour of literature on theological matters, and would have gladly seen his own books and those of others destroyed, if only men would read the Bible simply and sincerely. Of human nature he had formed no exalted conception. Mankind had gone astray in hideous aberration, in monstrous depravity, enamoured of darkness, unfriendly to light.†

When we discern with lucidity the position taken up by Luther on this matter we find that in part he was wrong, and in part right. He was right—so long as any *boná-fide* profession is made of belief in Christianity he must be admitted to have been right—in recalling Europe to *the pristine inspiration of Christianity.* This is his claim—a quite adequate claim—to the revering gratitude of Christians so long as they call themselves

sane non video, quomodo non sit noxia potius dialectice vero theologo. Esto, quod sit forte utilis juvenilium ingeniorum lusus vel exercitatio: sed in sacris literis, ubi mera fides et superna expectatur illustratio, foris relinquendus universus syllogismus, non aliter, quam Abraham sacrificaturus reliquit pueros cum asinis.—De Wette, 72.

* De Wette, 79.

† *Monstrum hominum genus, et tenebrarum populum lucis inimicum.*

by the name of Christ. On no reasonable hypothesis—by no party, lay or ecclesiastical—can it be disputed that it was a supremely good thing for Christendom, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, to be sent back to the typical Christianity of Christ and His apostles. Does Dr. Newman allege that the Church system of the Papacy was a legitimate development of New Testament Christianity? Still, it can with no plausibility be disputed that, after an interval of fifteen centuries, it was profitable to compare the development with the germs from which it had sprung. The analogy of the case with one presented in the world of vegetable nature is so close that, for those who believe in the harmonies and correspondences of universal existence, it must have a strictly argumentative value. The plant-species which, after having done good service for centuries, has either degenerated in fibre or suffered from parasitic attacks, can be restored to vigour only by being raised again from the seed. Luther maintained that mediæval Christianity, like the potato in our time, required raising again. If, on the other hand, turning from Doctor Newman, we address ourselves to those who press to its last possible extension the Protestant claim of intellectual freedom—to those who investigate the inspiration of Isaiah and Paul as they would investigate the inspiration of Homer—we can with equal justice bespeak their approval for Luther's determination to hark back upon the original records of the faith. Mr. Max Müller, if he wants to compare Christianity with other systems of religion, Mr. Matthew Arnold, if

he wants to know what Hebrew prophets meant by the Eternal, and what is the secret of Christ's gift of peace, will explicitly agree with Luther that it is essential to ascertain, first of all, not what mountains of commentary, not what Councils, Popes, or Presbyteries declare the Bible to mean, but what the original documents say for themselves.

Luther, indeed, while appealing from priest and commentator to the Bible, did not, as has been already observed, admit that Scripture could of itself impart saving knowledge without inner illumination. But no illumination of the soul could alter by one iota the grammatical meaning of the text, or overrule its authority. The miracle of grace was performed, not by altering Scripture, but through the instrumentality of Scripture. It must be added that he marked off, by much harder and faster lines than modern intelligence will sanction, the province of the supernatural from the province of the natural; the province of science from the province of revelation. There is now a *consensus* of belief that "God reveals Himself in many ways," and works by a variety of instruments. Luther, victimised in his youth by the infinite theorising, the interminable distinguishing and balancing, of the schoolmen, panted for clearness, precision, and certainty with an intensity too impatient and impetuous. His instincts were profoundly practical, and in all practical undertakings doubt is fatal to efficiency. To him, electrified by his doctrine of grace through faith, the testimony of the Bible seemed so dazzlingly

clear that honest denial of its purport was impossible. Let men but own the supreme and infallible authority of Scripture, and doubt and disputation would, he believed, be at an end.

Looking across the intervening centuries, the intelligent student of Luther, however deeply he may admire him, however highly he may prize his work, will grant that his apprehension of Divine method was not so cosmical as his apprehension of Divine truth was clear. It would but insult the modern reader's understanding to stay to prove that reason and conscience are candles of God in the soul, and that inspiration assists, co-operates with, illumines these, but by no means dispenses with or discredits them. There was an element of wrongness in Luther's thinking on this subject which wrought much evil to Protestant truth and to the Protestant cause. The day may come when we shall see him defying common sense and mathematics in reliance on the letter of Scripture.

No man's work, however, is perfect, and it is the method of the Power that works in historical evolution to do one thing at a time. To do one right and important thing at a time may indeed be the most effectual way to secure that other good things shall follow. Once the line of battle is pierced, it becomes a comparatively easy task to widen the gap and roll back the hostile array to left and right. No prophet. no reformer, if he really is one of God's great ones—no Elijah, no Luther —knows the ultimate scope and bearings of his work. But, on the other hand, what a brilliant stroke of

historic irony may we not find in the fact that ten thousand newspaper editors and platform orators now praise Luther *only* for his services to natural reason and to freedom of judgment and conscience! He did his work well; the honour of its direct and inevitable consequences is legitimately due to him ; but justice is bound to hold the scales even, and to acknowledge that when Trutvetter, *ultimus Scholasticorum*, and Martin Luther, father of modern Liberalism, crossed swords in logical fence, it was Trutvetter, not Luther, that championed natural reason.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST BRUSH WITH ROME—LUTHER AND PRIERIAS.

The thunderclap of the Wittenberg Theses, reverberating to the outskirts of Christendom, had not failed to reach, if only as a far-off, dying sound, the ear of Pope Leo. Whether, at the moment, his Holiness was top-booted for the chase, or seated at the genial board amid artists, poets, and buffoons, or in conference with his cardinals, we cannot tell. The Theses and the polemical *fracas* that ensued on their appearance would gradually emerge as topics of table-talk in the Vatican, and occasion might well arise for the remark imputed to him that the affair was a mere squabble among monks. A philosophical Pontiff would be indifferent to such noises; a temporal prince would despise them; an enlightened voluptuary, his heart—what he had of heart—set upon the chase, the fine arts, good wine, and similar delights, would not allow them to disturb the serious business, to wit, the pleasures, of life. In the absence of particular evidence on the point, we may believe Roscoe when he says that Leo at first proposed to treat Luther's affair in a spirit of light-minded, light-handed toleration. The rule of good-natured Leo, for all cases of the kind, would

obviously be to smooth them over. Being, besides, an admirer of curiosities in general, including the curiosity of *esprit* under the cowl of a German monk, Leo might note with interest that brother Martin had a fine genius; and it was natural that, since his Holiness had recently and narrowly escaped with his life from the machinations of his own cardinals, he might express satisfaction at the circumstance that this new trouble was, at worst, pretty far off—that the axe was not laid to the root, but to the branches.

One thing, however, is sun-clear in respect of Leo and Luther—that they were separated from each other by a great gulf, a gulf as profound as can divide human souls. The worldliest of all the Pontiffs, the worldliest in the sense of having never entertained—never pretended to entertain—the spiritual ambitions and aspirations appropriate to his office—what could Leo have in common with the most earnest man in Christendom, the man who had seen God's glance in the lightning-flash—the man who, after years of spiritual travail and wrestling, when his soul hung between madness and the grave, had felt himself filled with God as a new life, and was impelled by that mighty inspiration to purge the temple of God from idols and call all men to repent?

The first among the immediate bodyguards and champions of Leo to perceive the importance of the Wittenberg Theses, and to gird on his armour for an encounter with their author, was Silvester Mazolini, who, having been born in Prierio, a village in the Italian district of

Montferrat, was commonly known as Silvester Prierias. Silvester was a potent, far-shining figure in his time and place. Master of the Sacred Palace, Professor of Theology, Instructor of the Papal Household; a proud Dominican, invested by the Pope with the powers of Inquisitor in matters of faith; fluent, if not profound, in the scholasticism of Aquinas, and supremely confident in himself,—he reckoned it an easy business to answer this obstreperous monk of Wittenberg.

Three days sufficed Prierias for the demolition, to his own satisfaction, of the Theses. He quotes at length the propositions of Luther which he attempts to answer, omitting those on which there was no difference of opinion. The whole piece contains about as much matter as a long sermon or a short review article. So early as the 7th, and more fully on the 14th of January, 1518, we find Luther mentioning the performance in a letter to Spalatin. He had read it, and it had been the subject of talk among his friends. Neither he nor they knew anything of the real Silvester, and they were inclined to believe that the name had been invented by some one of the waggish clique who had manufactured the Letters of Obscure Men, as appropriate to designate a rustic wiseacre coming forward, with pedantic Latin and ostentatious reverence for the Pope and Aquinas, to defend the Papacy. The motive of the true author was supposed to be to provoke Luther to an answer, and thus involve him in fresh offence to the Church authorities. It was very far from Luther's purpose to subserve any such

design, and he thought it best, therefore, to be quiet.

The Pope, however, had really committed himself to Silvester's attack. Leo may have regarded the Saxon monk of genius with semi-friendly tolerance, but he was not man enough to do Luther justice. If it was too much to hope that he, who claimed the spiritual leadership of mankind—who professed to be, to all practical intents and purposes, a visible Christ—should have boldly declared Martin to be in the right, the elementary principles of justice required that he should give the rebuker of Tetzell a fair trial. It might be pardonable to appoint a Commission to try Luther; but it was flagrantly unjust to name a Commission of two, one of the Commissioners being Prierias, who had attacked Luther, and the other a mere dummy. This Leo did. This Luther learned that Leo had done. Silvester's *brochure*, therefore, became a serious matter, and Luther resolved to deal with it.

Silvester's manner was well adapted, from its Polonius-like pomposity and platitude, to irritate our fiery friend. The Pope's champion affects an air of easy, supercilious disdain, announcing that he is about to refute "one Martin-what-do-you-call-him?-Luther."* He is curious to know whether this nameless creature has a nose of iron and a head of brass. "It is this gentlest of gentlemen," writes Martin to Spalatin, when informing him that he means to answer Silvester, "who is both my adversary and judge."

* *Martino nescio cui Luther.*—Silvester's treatise. Loescher.

In two days Luther's reply was ready. It may be worth while to devote a word or two in passing to this fact, as an illustration of Luther's powers and habits of work. The treatise is in Latin—extremely forcible and expressive Latin—suggestive of flower-work in iron. It forms an able and forcible exposition and vindication of Luther's doctrine of repentance as a spiritual and internal process, and of his doctrine of salvation as a renewal of the soul in the life of God and the image of Christ. Passages of it continue vital and edifying at this hour. It abounds with Scriptural quotation, is closely logical, and never becomes in the slightest degree obscure or confused. No one would think of citing the piece in proof either of the greatness or of the originality of Luther's genius; but it furnishes a fairly good illustration of his mechanical powers and habits of work. It contains nearly 15,000 words. Now we learn from Mr. Trollope, one of the swiftest literary workers that ever lived, that it would have taken him fifteen consecutive hours, without laying down his pen, and using his native language, to write 15,000 words. As there is no evidence that Luther neglected other matters in order to answer Prierias, or that he looked upon his performance as in the slightest degree notable or exceptional, we conclude that he was a man of extraordinary gifts of concentration and production, and that his pace, of mind and of hand, was exceptionally rapid.

Before turning the page upon Prierias, we shall find it profitable to lay a finger-touch upon one or two points in this his controversy with Luther. The

Master of the Palace lays down, as one of the grand foundations of his argumentative fabric, the following proposition: "Whosoever is not imbued with the doctrine of the Roman Church and the Roman Pontiff, as the infallible rule of faith, from which even Holy Scripture draws its strength and authority, is a heretic." * This, mark it well, is the position taken up, at the moment when Luther steps forward in the face of Europe as a reformer of the Church, by the man whom the Pope appoints to be his judge. The claim could not be more distinctly or emphatically made, on behalf of the Church and Pope of Rome, to take precedence of Scripture. If we wish to have both the aim and the method of Luther's enterprise as a reformer briefly stated, we cannot do better than say that he controverted this position of Silvester's, appealing to the Bible, and challenging the right of any man, or body of men, to exert authority over it. When Dr. Newman talks, therefore, of the novelty of Protestantism, the answer is twofold. In the first place, Protestantism, in the form of an intermittent reaction against the hierarchical system, a low yearning and groaning as of nations in spiritual pain, was audible in Europe for a thousand years before the birth of Luther. In the second place, if the Protest of Luther had been made twenty thousand years after

* *Fundamentum tertium: Quicunque non initur doctrinæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ, ac Romani Pontificis, tanquam Regulæ fidei infallibili, a quâ etiam sacra Scriptura robur trahit et autoritatem, hæreticus est.*—Silvester's treatise. Loescher.

the age of the Apostles, still, since his appeal was to the original inspiration, he could not be logically charged with introducing a newer thing than *that*.

For the rest, Prierias moves along with scholastic formality, imitating, rather perhaps in the way of an ape imitating his master, the movements of Aquinas. Luther overwhelms him with volcanic masses of inspiration, glowing hot, from St. Paul. The completeness of Luther's absorption at this time, and, indeed, at all times, in the idea of God—the entireness of his divestment of self and putting on of God—may be made vivid by a remark of his, in this reply to Silvester, on the subject of Tauler. He quotes Tauler as saying that, if heaven were open before a believer, he would not do right to enter it until he asked God's permission, seeing that, even in glory, the Christian may not seek his own things, but God's. This opinion of Tauler's Luther pronounces "most true and most theological."

Prierias descends to the meanness of questioning the purity of his opponent's motives. "Luther," says the Master of the Palace, addressing the monk in a tone of impertinent familiarity, "if you had received from our Lord (the Pope) a good bishopric, with a plenary indulgence for the repair of your church, you might have found sweeter words." Luther answers, with contemptuous brevity, that Prierias reads his, Luther's, mind by his own, and that, if he had wanted a bishopric, he would have written something very different from what his censor is attempting to refute. All the world knew how promotion was to be had at Rome!

Book VI.

LUTHER AND CAJETAN.

AUGUST TO NOVEMBER, 1518.

Book VI.

LUTHER AND CAJETAN.

CHAPTER I.

ANOTHER JOURNEY, NOT OF PLEASURE.

Within a very short time—measurable in weeks, if not in days—after despatching his letter to the Pope, Luther became gravely suspicious, or more than suspicious, that the disposition of the Roman authorities was implacably hostile to the work of reformation and to himself. How should he adjust himself to this position of affairs?

He had the firmest conviction, to begin with, that he stood where God ordered him to stand, that he was under express injunction to preach the word of salvation as it had been revealed to his own soul. Most solemnly did he believe that he had not called himself to stand in the breach, but that he had been divinely called, and that his cause was the cause of the Highest. It might be his duty to die. For that he was calmly prepared, nay, he felt in his heart that this was the highest honour that could be conferred upon him. "I hope," he wrote to Wenzel Link, one of his dearest friends, "that I am a debtor to Jesus Christ, who perchance has said to me also, 'I will show him how great things it behoves him to suffer for My Name.'" If the

Master does not thus recognise the servant—does not thus make common cause with him—why did He call him? "Why did He lay upon me, hugely against my will,* the duty of preaching this Word?" The more wildly his enemies threaten, therefore, the more implicitly will he confide in his Lord. And then, lapsing into a sprightlier mood, he touches upon the advantage of *non*-possession in the way of securing immunity from the anxieties of possible loss. "My wife and my children are provided for, my lands, my house, my whole substance, are disposed of; my glory and fame are gone already: one thing remains, an ill-conditioned, broken-down body: if they take that, they will make me poorer by a few hours of life—the soul they will not manage to carry off."

If, however, we infer from Luther's expression of his trust in God, on the one hand, and from his light-hearted sense of having little to lose on the other, that he is ready to court martyrdom, or that he will expose himself, in the spirit of reckless adventure and mere negligence, to any avoidable danger, we shall greatly err. Few things are more noteworthy than the reverent elevation of view with which he always regards martyr-

* De Wette, 73. *Cur in officium verbi hujus me* invitissimum *posuit?* De Wette, to whom all Lutheran students must own their obligations for his edition of Luther's Letters, prints the word I have put into Roman *invictissimum*. The context lends some slight plausibility to this reading, but the words *fuit voluntas sua sacra* point decisively to an overruling of Luther's will by Christ's. We know that the idea of his having been constrained to preach the Gospel was familiar to Luther, whereas it is difficult to imagine him describing himself as "most unconquerable."

dom. A supreme honour and privilege if appointed him by the express and unmistakeable ruling of Providence, death for the good cause would nevertheless, if encountered in mere bravado, or blundered into from negligence, make him, he instinctively feels, partaker of the sins of presumption, of cowardly desertion of one's post, and of self-slaughter. On this point Luther contrasts favourably with Huss. A more devout or sincere man than Huss never lived; but there have been many sounder, many stronger men; and Luther was one. We observe in Huss an almost hysterical hankering after martyrdom. The strong Saxon manhood of Luther saved him from such febrile excess of virtue.

Nor was he capable of self-mystification as to the nature and extent of the assistance which the Divine Power might be expected to afford him in his conflict. He had no expectation of miracle. On this side his massive sense gave him advantage over Savonarola. His clearness and force of mental vision made it impossible that he could have entertained for a moment the suggestion of playing the part played by Savonarola in connection with the trial by fire. He wanted no new attestation of the truth, and he neither dreaded nor courted martyrdom. We shall now proceed with our narrative.

Having learned, shortly after his passionate profession of loyalty to Pope Leo, that a Commission had been named for the conduct of his trial, and that this Commission practically consisted of a man who had controversially attacked him as a heretic, Luther next

became aware that he was cited by this tribunal to appear in Rome within sixty days to take his trial. The flagrancy, the rude haste and heartlessness, of summoning him to Rome, away from his friends and protectors, to be judged by his professed adversary, struck him so strongly that he made up his mind to disobey the summons and disregard the Court. He might not unreasonably say that, in his most highly-wrought paroxysm of willingness to submit himself to the judgment of Leo, he could not be presumed to include submission to such a judge as Silvester Prierias.

Had it been possible for him to occupy a position of isolation—could he have put himself apart from the cause of truth and the cause of Germany—he might have gone to take life or death from Leo in Rome. But if he had done this, he would have owned the right of an Italian to summon to his bar the natives of Germany. It could not be said that, in respectfully claiming to be tried in his own country, he renounced allegiance to the Pope or called in question the jurisdiction of the Holy See.

In his present attitude we discover no trace of that passionate humiliation in which, metaphorically speaking, he lay wriggling, in his letter, at the feet of the Pope. With the rapid apprehension and prompt decision of practical genius, he takes the steps necessary to secure that he shall be tried in Germany. He can trust the Elector, and writes to him at once, asking him to interest himself in procuring, from the Emperor and the Pope, that he shall have a German trial.

Princes are apt to have full hands and short memories; Luther bethinks him of the fact, and writes to Spalatin, informing him that he has written to the Elector, and pointing out that the matter is one that admits of no delay. "As you love me and hate unrighteousness, seek the advice and help of the Prince at once. When you have done so, let me know the result, or, still better, send direct word of it to our Father Vicar, John Staupitz."* Could Napoleon himself, instructing one of his marshals, have been more exact or prompt? Leo will find that he has to do in this instance neither with a brawling monk nor with a shrieking fanatic, but with a clear-headed, alert, and sagacious man. Luther does not scruple, believing himself to be matched against guileful and unscrupulous adversaries, to have recourse to diplomatic strategy. At the suggestion of friends, he tells Spalatin that he may find it advisable to make overt application to the Prince for a safe-conduct beyond Saxony, with a view to a journey to Rome, which application the Prince is to refuse, his refusal becoming available for Luther in excusing his disregard of the citation.† It did not prove necessary for Luther to have recourse to this expedient, but it is incumbent on his biographer to mention it. If Leo wants a man to trepan this Martin, he must look for one who understands the game of diamond cut diamond.

Luther's friends, as he mentions in a short *addendum* to his letter, advise him further that the document signifying the Elector's declinature to give a safe-

* De Wette, 74. † *Ibid.*, 75.

conduct would require to be ante-dated. "In this they say there will be no falsehood, because the mind and will of the prince have always been made up against the granting of a safe-conduct." We may call his refusal in August a refusal in June, because his disposition to refuse in June was as great as his disposition to refuse in August. A nice point in casuistical ethics! It does not appear that Luther and his allies were forced to adopt the contemplated artifice, the main object of transferring the trial from Rome to Germany being otherwise secured.

When Luther, in the second half of August, 1518, sent this letter to Spalatin, the latter was at Augsburg, where the Emperor Maximilian, the Electoral Princes of Germany, and other high and mighty personages, were holding a Diet of the Empire. It had been convoked without any reference to Martin Luther or his Theses. Maximilian, feeling that his end could not be far off, was desirous of promoting the election of his grandson, Charles, the young King of Spain, of Naples, and of the Indies, to succeed him in the Imperial dignity. His object, therefore, in holding the Diet, was to use his influence with the princes in favour of Charles. The Pope was represented by the learned and illustrious Thomas Vio of Gaeta, known to history as Cardinal Cajetanus. In the name of the Pope, Cajetanus appealed to the Emperor and the Princes to marshal the armies of Christendom against the advancing Turk. This would involve the raising of large sums of money, and German suspicion was always aroused by

proposals to raise money emanating from the Vatican. Cajetan found the Diet in an irritable, uneasy, captious mood. Wild words were flying about; wild overturning spirits, animated with fierce hatred of Pope and Papacy, haunted the corridors, and whispered that the worst of Turks sat enthroned in Rome. A sense of approaching revolution was in the air, revolution which, for many minds, took first of all the shape of religious reformation. Luther's influence was at work, though it is probable that his name was little mentioned.

At this date, however, it is almost exclusively from the fact of Luther's having had some slight relation to it that the Imperial Diet held at Augsburg in 1518 possesses the smallest interest for mankind. In its bearing on Maximilian's purpose in favour of his grandson, the session proved to be merely preliminary, neither the Pope nor the German Princes letting themselves be prevailed upon to assure Maximilian of Charles's election. Out of the Papal agitation for an anti-Turkish crusade there came, in like manner, no more solid result than words, words, words. But the Diet of Augsburg of 1518, and the political situation in the Europe of that time, have yet one point of memorability—that they contributed to bring it about that the citation of Luther to take his trial for heresy in Rome was cancelled. The approaching election to the imperial throne placed Frederick of Saxony in the position of one whom both Maximilian and Leo were exceedingly anxious to conciliate. Frederick's influence in the Electoral College was known to be supreme, and it was a very far

from improbable hypothesis that he might be Emperor himself. Accordingly, though Maximilian would have deemed it rather in his favour than otherwise, by way of preparation for departure to another world, to play, in relation to Luther, the part which his predecessor, Sigismund, had played in relation to Huss, he did not turn a deaf ear to Frederick when he demanded a German trial for the German monk. And Leo, who, in frivolous remissness to the duties of his office, had first jested about Luther, and then mocked him with the offer of a sham trial, was much less concerned about crushing the Wittenberg Doctor than ingratiating himself with the Elector of Saxony. Frederick, therefore, was able to induce both the Emperor and the Pope to concede that Luther should be tried in Germany. Had Maximilian, instead of being absorbed in the project of securing his grandson's election, been oppressed with superstitious terrors *à propos* of his approaching death, and had Leo, instead of caring only for secular objects, been a wise and wary zealot, bent on asserting his ecclesiastical authority, the deadliest peril to which Luther was exposed, that of being forced to put himself into the power of the Papacy by proceeding to Rome, would have been escaped by him, if escaped at all, with far more difficulty than he actually encountered.

Leo having decided that Frederick must be humoured in this matter, Cardinal Cajetan, instead of returning to Italy after the business of the Diet was done with, and autumnal airs admonished him to seek the sunny south,

was instructed to undertake the task of bringing the monk to his right mind. On the 9th of September, 1518, Luther writes to Lange that he has heard by letter from Frederick that the transference of his trial from Rome to Germany is being arranged. The place is to be Augsburg, the judge Cajetan. Undeterred by warnings that his enemies are plotting his destruction, and that he may be set upon and strangled or drowned, Luther resolves to proceed to Augsburg. Firmly persuaded that his theology is Catholic and sound, he has no wish to evade a fair trial.

He goes forth, as usual, on foot. His track takes him to Weimar, the headquarters of the Saxon Court at that time. Here letters awaited him, addressed to various men likely to be of use to him in Augsburg. He had expected an Imperial safe-conduct, but the Elector, as Spalatin wrote, did not consider it necessary. He preached in the Castle Church, choosing as his subject the grace of humility, and expatiating, in his usual strain, on the comprehensive worthlessness of man and the infinite goodness and glory of God. He touched with pointed severity upon the pomp, luxury, and domination of bishops, whose peculiar duty it was, according to the Gospel, to be servants of the flock. Nor did he scruple to glance at the Bishop of bishops, who sat aloft, not serving, but extorting service. These assumptions of Pope and bishops he characterised as Antichristian. Having censured bishops, he devoted a few sharp words of rebuke to another class of persons. To false prophets, passing themselves off as true,

he showed no mercy; and he expressly denounced "heretics."

His Weimar lodging was the Franciscan Convent, whose Prior, John Kestner, warned him that the Italians would be too strong for him, and would end the matter by fire. In reply, he asked for Kestner's prayers to God, whose the matter was. "If He holds it up, it will be holden; if He holds it not up, I cannot; His, therefore, will be the shame." A notable utterance, that would have been irreverent had it not been earnest.

At Nuremberg he was joined by Wenzel Link, Prior of the Augustinian Convent of the town. Link was by no means his only friend in Nuremberg. In that famed seat of ingenious industry and municipal freedom Luther's views excited keen interest, and his person and character were the objects of affectionate admiration. The original, and in his own line incomparable, Albrecht Dürer, was an adherent and friend. It is improbable, however, that he engaged in much social festivity with his Nuremberg associates on the present occasion. His mood was far from one of exhilaration; he thought it seriously probable that he might be on his way to a violent death. Besides—to step from the sublime to the ridiculous—his monkish garb had become so dilapidated that he would hardly have dared to parade his looped and windowed raggedness among the sleek burghers of Nuremberg. In order to enter Augsburg in a state of respectability, he was forced to borrow a coat from Link. Some among his detractors have ventured to affirm that, in going to

meet Cajetan in a borrowed coat, he merely studied theatrical effect. Could he not, they ask, had he so pleased, have been well enough dressed before leaving Wittenberg? The truth is that, had he come in any other guise except as the poorest of men, he would have conveyed a false idea of his habits of life and of his whole state and position. Had he wished to parade his poverty and show what a saint he was, he would have gone on in his rags. He went suited as became him, a monk under vow of poverty, but with no wish to make a pharisaic display of his poverty. For this world's wealth, in all shapes and forms, he displayed, first and last, a Pauline unconcern. He might, no doubt, have applied, and could not have applied unsuccessfully, to Frederick for clothing; but in the overpowering throng of avocations he might well be excused for neglecting to do so. On foot, in a borrowed coat, he departed from Nuremberg to traverse the final stages of his long journey. His exhaustion had become extreme, and at last, utterly broken down, he was forced to avail himself of a conveyance.

CHAPTER II.

ITALIAN AND SAXON.

Weary almost to death, and vexed with dyspeptic pains, grievous to experience, impossible to define—*nescio quo gravi incommodo stomachi*—Luther found himself at last in the Carmelite Convent of Augsburg, and could take a little rest. His strong brain, his steady nerve, had known no febrile quivering in the utmost stress of physical prostration, and he was soon himself again. "*Revalui*," he says, "I regained my *vis* and valour."*

At Augsburg the safe-conduct which he had expected to find at Weimar was still not forthcoming, and he resolved that, though announcing his arrival to Cajetan, he would not put himself into the Cardinal's power by visiting him in his own quarters. He was not without judicious friends in Augsburg. Dr. Conrad Peutinger, a man of position and of official influence; Christopher Langemantel, a Canon, and of noble family; and Dr. John Aver, a jurist and councillor, friends of the Elector, were prepared to afford him the best advice.

Luther had not been named in the Cardinal's original instructions; but part of the duty appointed

* De Wette, 81.

him was to take sharp inquisition of heresy in Bohemia "and the adjacent parts," an expression which applies well to Saxony. It was a main object of Cajetan's mission to exalt the Pope and the Pope's Church, to frown upon innovation in doctrine or discipline, and to discourage everything that tended to attenuate the authority or diminish the revenues of the Roman See. Cajetan had arrived at Augsburg in June, 1518. On the 1st of August he had invested, with what pageantry and ceremonial may be imagined, our eminent acquaintance, Albert of Hohenzollern, Prince-Archbishop of Magdeburg and Mayence, with the dignity of Cardinal. Albert represented, to the world's eye, the solemn league and covenant between Germany and the Papacy; and Albert's investiture as Cardinal was an emphatic announcement in dumb show that the system of the Church stood unmoved under the auspices of the Sovereign Pontiff and the Prince-Archbishop. What could a monk of Erfurth, a Doctor of Wittenberg, effect against potentates like these?

Those high ceremonies must have been pleasing to the ecclesiastical heart of Cajetan, requiring, as they did, no more than a dignified enunciation of formulas and a fitting stateliness of demeanour. But it was quite another thing to be detained in rude Bavaria, near the sources of the Danube, instead of receiving congratulations by the yellow Tiber, in order to reduce to silence this teasing monk, whom now, knowing the interest taken in him by Frederick of Saxony, he must have felt to be a person of some consequence.

On one point the Cardinal evidently agreed with his master—that the best possible way of disposing of the matter would be to pooh-pooh it, to hush it up, to paint it over. The essential thing was to get Luther to leave off thundering. Cajetan was disposed to dismiss him with smiles if only he would consent, first, to make large general acknowledgment of the sanctity and authority of Pope and Church; secondly, to apologise for words heedlessly spoken; and, thirdly, to permit himself to be muzzled.

As Luther firmly refused to wait upon Cajetan in his quarters before the arrival of the Imperial safe-conduct, the great man deemed it judicious to reconnoitre the ground, and for that purpose despatched to Luther, in an unofficial, offhand way, a confidential envoy.

Urban of Serralonga belonged to a type of men common in all times of advanced civilisation, and particularly common in Italy at that period. In point of fact, we may say that it was the prevalent and fashionable type among polite Italians, the fashion being set by Pope Leo. To Serralonga it seemed the most unreasonable thing on earth that any one should create disturbance about matters of belief. Could it possibly be doubted that it was our duty to make things pleasant all round? Whether a man conceited himself a prophet, bringing with him airs and doctrines of heaven, or whether he were a heretic booked for perdition, he might surely hold his tongue, and not inflict his heavenly wisdom, or his infernal nonsense, upon sane and jovially-minded persons.

Serralonga approached Martin with dashing candour, with brusqueness which lavish professions of friendly intention should soften into courtesy. He was bent, he said, upon rendering Luther service. There was a royal road to pardon, peace, and honour, which Martin could traverse if he chose. He had but to throw himself on the mercy of the Cardinal and the Pope, to submit without reserve to the Church, and all would be well. Active opposition having ceased, obnoxious expressions which had found their way into sermons or theses having been withdrawn, and loyal courses being promised for the future, the benign Father of Christendom would open his arms to the repentant sinner. Did not Joachim of Flores, though he spoke things heretical, escape the doom of a heretic because he knew when to practise a politic reserve?

Such a character as that of Serralonga was an enigma to Luther; first, because diametrically the reverse of his own, and secondly, because lying as yet beyond the range of his experience. If he had met with it in Italy, on his brief visit to Rome, he had not comprehended it; and in Germany that stage of civilisation at which, for many minds, belief and no-belief are matters of equal indifference, had not yet been reached. The gay proposals of Serralonga sounded in his ears as neither more nor less than a suggestion that he should admit, to the world, to his own soul, and to his God, that his whole life up to that hour had been a melodramatic farce, with no true meaning, and that he was himself an impudent, mouthing impostor.

With a look of unfathomable amazement in his black eyes, he replied to his brusquely amiable interviewer that he was ready to withdraw his words if he were proved to have been in the wrong. It was his heartfelt wish to speak and act with loyalty towards Pope and Church; but he believed his doctrine to be the doctrine of God's Word and of the best fathers and divines, and until it was shown to be heretical he could not recant. The people of Germany—his own flock in Wittenberg—had been addressed by the Indulgence preachers in a manner subversive of Christian truth, and fraught with deadliest peril to morality. He could not, as answerable to God for those to whom he ministered in spiritual things, refrain from protesting against such abuses. When convinced of his error he would retract it—not till then. Such was his reply.

To Serralonga Luther was as much a phenomenon as Serralonga was to Luther. To Luther, Serralonga seemed an impious trifler; to Serralonga, Luther appeared an absurd compound of pedant, enthusiast, and bore. The Italian pooh-poohed those serious ways of looking at the business. Why be so dreadfully in earnest? Reformation? Conviction? Truth and error? Were they, then, to have one of those interminable discussions—those battles of the winds—those theological tournaments in which champion tilted against champion in the wordy war, and no mortal could tell which was the stronger? Why make such a fuss about soundness of doctrine? Why raise such a noise about Indulgences? May not the multitude be

treated *proprio modo*, the way it is fit for? May not the *vulgus profanum* be hoodwinked a little, with a view to its being taught to "fork out" for pious purposes? "Thereupon," says Luther, almost as much astounded and bewildered as the theological student in Goethe's drama when Mephistopheles, deftly disguised as professor, favoured him with advice, "he launched into the insanest propositions, openly confessing that, in his opinion, it was lawful to preach lies if only they made a good *quæstum*—a paying tale—and filled the coffer. He denied that the power of the Pope ought even to be touched upon in disputation." To Luther's Saxon simplicity, integrity, and devout fear of God, this frisky, free-and-easy spokesman of the most reverend Cardinal was the very devil incarnate. And the Cardinal was the representative of the Vicar of Christ! Dark and terrible thoughts began to arise in Luther's soul—thoughts of a great horror, a blackness as of despair and pandemonium, enveloping Christendom—a darkness to be rent only by the lightnings of the Almighty.

With as much civility as could be mustered at the moment, he dismissed Serralonga. When the first tumult of his feelings had subsided, he bethought him that the Italians had hardly displayed their nation's craft in sending him "a Sinon like this"—Sinon, readers may remember, having been the envoy of wily Ulysses to the Trojans, to induce them to admit the wooden horse and lose their town. One thing, however, he had now discovered, and he felt its melancholy importance. He knew the kind of people with whom he

had to do. On the whole, the interview had, he concluded, been of value to him. And his last thought on the subject was that, after all, there could be nothing very formidable in men who could try to win him over by such a messenger. "No small confidence," he says, "did I derive from my interview with that fool of a mediator."

CHAPTER III.

FACE TO FACE WITH CAJETAN.

But the Imperial safe-conduct has arrived, and Luther no longer scruples to go to Cajetan. Their first meeting occurred on the 11th of October, 1518. Serralonga was present, acting the part of master of the ceremonies or supreme usher, and made it his business to put Luther through the bowing and genuflecting required by the supersublime dignity of the Pope's Legate. Martin prostrated himself before the great man, and was graciously told to get up again.

It speedily appeared that Serralonga had done no injustice to his superior. Cajetan at first conducted himself exactly as his messenger had prepared Luther to expect. He, a Cardinal, a Prince of the Church, a renowned Thomist also, could not for one moment entertain the thought of engaging in dialectical combat with brother Martin. He received the monk with smiles, and vouchsafed professions of an intention to treat him with paternal forbearance; but Luther believed that a feline purpose lurked in the elaborate civility of his manner.* Be the Cardinal's motive what it might, he

* *Esse eum in me exacerbatissimum intus, quicquid simulet foris.*— De Wette, 81.

declined to enter upon any attempt to convince Luther that he had been in error. He very well knew that Leo had committed himself to a condemnation of Luther, and the only question he considered to be now in dispute was whether and how Luther, having made submission, might be restored to favour. There is no reason to doubt that, if Luther had consented to efface himself, and be false to the cause of reformation, both Leo and Cajetan would have been pleased to forget and forgive. But the Legate treated it as mere presumption and contumacy, on Luther's part, that he should decline to take the Papal *ipse dixi* in lieu of proof from Scripture. One thing would promptly heal the breach, and only one—that Luther should recant. "Own your error. Take the Pope's will for law. Your being convinced or unconvinced is of no manner of consequence. Recant, recant, recant."*

Luther, of course, remained unmoved. He was the last man in the world to be browbeaten into submission. He told Cajetan, as he had told Serralonga, that he would gladly recant if his error were brought home to him. The Church and the Pope he would maintain to be on his side, as well as all the best authorities in Catholic theology, until they were proved to be against him.

Affairs continued in this posture for an indefinite, but apparently very considerable, time. Luther humbly but firmly invited discussion, and declined to recant unless proved to be in error. Cajetan had come not to argue

* These are not given as Cajetan's words, but as his meaning.

but to judge, and did his best, whether by bullying or by coaxing, to make Luther yield. But it was difficult for Cajetan to maintain these tactics. An adept in the scholastic art of disputation, he doubtless thought himself more than Luther's match in dialectical sword-play. It seemed cowardly that he, a learned and puissant Cardinal, should not vouchsafe the few words of irresistible logic that might confound the puny though presumptuous friar. Gradually, little by little, he was drawn into a desultory and informal exchange of views and arguments.

The grand object of Cajetan being to hush matters up, and reduce Luther to silence on the question of Indulgences, his cue was to show that the Pope had at his disposal a treasure of merit, which could be dealt out, whether to living or to dead. If this treasure were infinite, and if the Pope possessed the right and power to dispense it, the theory and practice of Indulgence might admit of valid defence. Luther had, at this time, by no means divested himself of the idea that the Roman See inherited privileges and powers of a transcendent character. The Power of the Keys he believed to be legitimately wielded by the Roman Pontiff—or, if he had indeed begun to doubt in his heart whether the power bestowed upon the Church by Christ was focussed in the Church of Rome, he had made no such public announcement of the fact that he could, or would, dispute Cajetan's right to take his orthodoxy on the point for granted. What Luther was firmly convinced of was that God alone could

forgive sin, that the Church, exercising the Power of the Keys, could, at utmost, recognise what God had done, and that a treasury of merit, distinct from the Power of the Keys, was a mere figment of theologians. The discrepancy between the faith of Cajetan and the faith of Luther was, in fact, irreconcilable; but there were so many points on which they used a similar language, and the whole subject was so complicated, obscure, and difficult, that they could bandy arguments for hours without result.

At last it occurred to Cajetan that he had hit upon a short and easy method with Luther. Pope Clement, he felt sure, had said something implying that the Holy See had command of the treasury of Christ's merits. Those merits Luther, of course, acknowledged to be infinite. Here then, seeing that Luther did not disallow the authority of the Pope, was an argument which even the most prejudiced or stupid observer must perceive to be conclusive against him. "Pope Clement," Cajetan cried out, "had expressly declared that the merits of Christ were the treasure of Indulgences:" the debate, therefore, was at an end; he absolutely declined to have more speech on a matter which was too clear to be argued. Luther would not own himself defeated, and continued to press for a hearing. The Cardinal, however, would not forego his advantage. Had Pope Clement said so, or had he not? Luther could not, on the spur of the moment, challenge the correctness of the citation from Pope Clement, nor was he prepared to call in question the authority of a Pope.

Such being the position, Cajetan could, with no small show of reason and justice, assume the air of one whose controversial opponent was merely making a show of fence after receiving his death-wound. He would suffer no remonstrance, listen to no reply, but bore down every effort at opposition by an avalanche of words. At length, however, the persistent attempts of Luther to expostulate prevailed sufficiently with the Cardinal to induce him to grant permission to the monk to reply to his redoubtable argument in writing.

Martin accordingly retired, and drew up a brief, lucid, and powerful defence of his main doctrine of pardon by the grace of God, not by letter of Papal Indulgence. He took care at the same time to refresh his memory by actual inspection of the passage from Pope Clement on which Cajetan had staked his whole case. Thus prepared, he returned, after a day or two, document in hand, to the presence of the Legate. He was accompanied on this occasion by Philip von Feilitsch, a nobleman who represented the Elector, as well as by Staupitz, Link, and other friends. The bold Saxon monk, who stood unabashed before the Prince-Cardinal, had excited the curiosity even of Cajetan's retinue, and Italians as well as Germans crowded into the audience-chamber.

Luther opened the proceedings by presenting his defence to the Cardinal. It was written in that Latin which, in Luther's hand, formed so admirable a weapon of controversy, and its trenchant, ringing sentences had incurred no detriment from the circumstance of their

having been composed in hot haste and in the fervour and agitation of conflict.* Cajetan glanced over the writing impatiently, and then, waiving consideration of its particular propositions, fell back upon the position which he had formerly taken up; to wit, that Pope Clement had settled the question. He condescended to launch into a long rhetorical harangue, showing off his attainments and accomplishments as a Coryphæus of the schools, a leading authority on the works of Thomas. The drift and tendency of his discourse, we may safely assume—for no report exists of the oration—was to exalt the authority of the Popes, and to demonstrate the unspeakable value of that treasure of merits which it was theirs, in letters of Indulgence and otherwise, to dispense. Was this not enough? Was the miserable little friar (*fraterculus*) of Wittenberg still unsatisfied, unconvinced, unsilenced?

Luther was all three; but, so often as he attempted to speak, the Cardinal bellowed him down. "Ten times almost," says Luther, "I tried to put in my word. Ten times he thundered me down and reigned alone."

What was to be done? Martin, though he could bridle his temper when necessary, was not without central fire, and began to experience some thrill of righteous anger. Nor was he devoid of humour, and every man of humour has an underhand, more or less repressed—in Luther it generally was very sternly suppressed—love of mischief. He was thoroughly

* Loescher.

versed in the dialectical methods of the schools—a circumstance on which he sometimes commented as a kind of wretched compensation for the time he had wasted upon their subtleties. Since Cajetan obstinately refused to have the question between them discussed on large and Scriptural principles—since the moral influence of such preaching of Indulgence as Tetzell's was, in the eyes of the Pope's Legate, a light matter—since the Pope and the schoolmen were the objects of his idolatry—then, to the words of a Pope and to the method of the schools, he, Martin, would have recourse. Suddenly elevating his voice, he cried out, with a vehemence that cowed even the clamouring shrillness of his opponent enough to make him pause and listen, that, if Pope Clement could be really shown to have declared the merits of Christ to be the treasure of indulgence, he, Luther, would recant.

Cajetan scarcely believed his ears. At the first moment we may suppose him gazing in dumb amazement. We know for certain that he soon broke out into ecstasies of self-congratulation. "Heavens," says Luther, "what a gesticulating, what a cachinnation!" Cajetan thought his adversary was delivering himself into his hands. To the book, then; here is the very passage of Pope Clement; look, read, and subside into perpetual silence, thou preposterous little hornet of a friar! Cajetan himself reads aloud, with what panting fervour,* what gleaming exultation, may be imagined, the very words in which Pope Clement affirms that

* *Legit fervens et anhelans.*—De Wette, 83.

Christ by the merits of His passion "acquired the treasure of Indulgence." There: is not that enough? Luther cried out at once, "Ha! most reverend Father, stop a bit. This word 'acquired,' what are we to make of it? If Christ by the merits of His passion *acquired* the treasure, then the merits cannot *be* the treasure."

The full-blown pride of the Cardinal collapsed like a pierced balloon. The price of a thing and the thing itself are as distinct and separate as any two things could be. This a child might understand. The two are no more the same than a Cardinal's hat and the price paid for it are the same. Cajetan did not know what to do. Trying hard to hide his confusion, he made an attempt to skip off to some other subject. But Luther felt that his turn had come, and was in no relenting mood. "Your most reverend Paternity," he went on, in a tone which, with frank humour, he tells us, was "certainly irreverent enough," "must not suppose that, Germans though we be, we are ignorant of grammar. It is one thing to *be* a treasure and another to *acquire* a treasure." A love of mischief was unquestionably one element in this reformer's character.

Poor Cajetan! The laugh was clearly upon the side of the little friar. Even the Italians, there is too much reason to believe, were tittering. Tell it not in Gaeta. Whisper not of it in the streets of Rome. The discomfited Cardinal, we are to recollect, was held to be one of the most learned theologians and skilful disputants of his time. He had made a special study of Indulgences. He had published a treatise on the subject. It was

dedicated to a Cardinal who afterwards became a Pope, and we may be sure that it had as august sponsors as Rome could furnish. So far as appears, it had been received by Europe with profound silence. The little friar's Theses, posted on a church door in the north of Germany, had reverberated, like a long peal of heaven's own thunder, from Elbe to Tiber. And now when, backed by all the authority of the Papacy, the Cardinal had the friar before him, he not only did not petrify the creature by his look, but was made a laughing-stock of by him. Poor Cajetan! But judge whether the Germans who witnessed the interview were not in a state of satisfaction. These Italians have regarded us as clods of the valley; and here is our Saxon peasant, in borrowed coat, putting their haughty Cardinal to confusion!

Things having reached this pass, what could happen except that Cajetan, losing everything else, should lose his temper also? He told Luther to get out of his sight, and, unless prepared to recant, not to reappear.

CHAPTER IV.

NOTES FROM LUTHER'S HAND AND CAJETAN'S.

On the 11th of October—at about the very time when he actually entered the presence of the Legate—Luther wrote to Melanchthon,* or, as he had already learned to call him, his "sweetest Philip." His particular purpose in writing was to perform an act of kindness—amid his own troubles and engrossments he found time for that. One Bossenstein, who seems to have been on his way to Melanchthon, probably with a view to tuition in Greek, had applied to Luther for some furtherance in the way of introduction and commendation. He describes Bossenstein as *anxius et modicæ fidei*, a painful person with but a modicum of faith. It seems to strike him as not impossible that the brilliant Philip may cold-shoulder the painful man, and therefore bespeaks for him, in sportive tone, considerate treatment. *Tu viscera, non ossa, in eo ostende.* In dealing with him show bowels, not bones—not angular elbow-joints. And so *exit* Bossenstein.

Turning to other matters, Luther tells Melanchthon that there is nothing new or wonderful going on in Augsburg, unless it be that the town is full of rumour

* De Wette, 82.

about himself, every one wanting to see the Herostratus whose name has got linked to so great a conflagration. His mind then reverts to Wittenberg, and, as he thinks of its buzz of pious industry—scholarship and the Gospel hand in hand—Melanchthon the emblem of their union—his words, as usual, gather fervour, and flow and glow along in affectionate enthusiasm. "As for you, play the man, as you are doing, and impart noble instruction to youth. I go, if such is God's will, to be offered up for you and for them. I should rather perish, and endure that bitterest of all calamities, to bid lasting farewell to your enchanting conversation, than recant words well spoken, and be made an occasion for the subversion of generous studies."

Next he speaks of the Italians: "Under the influence of these fierce and foolish opponents of sound principles, Italy has been cast into Egyptian darkness. Such and so universal is their ignorance of Christ and of the things that are Christ's. And yet these are the men we have for lords and masters in faith and manners! Thus is the wrath of God fulfilled upon us, as is written, 'I will give them children for princes, and fools shall reign over them.' Good bye, my Philip; avert God's anger by your unsullied prayers."

On the 14th of the month, the day when Cajetan had driven him from his presence, Luther wrote to Spalatin in particularly vivid and racy Latin.* To this letter we are mainly indebted for the account of the interview which has been laid before the reader. But

* De Wette, 84.

still, on the same eventful day, his untiring pen dashed off, for Carlstadt, a sketch of the same transaction. Carlstadt was neither so old nor so learned a friend as Spalatin, and to him Luther writes in German. He describes Cajetan as soft and sweet enough in words, but as inflexibly determined to compel him to recant. Carlstadt was given to speculative theology; he would be interested, therefore, to learn that Cajetan, in the opinion of Luther, was theologically a pitiful failure. Downright heresy, Luther said, and much of it, could be extracted from the propositions of this fine Cardinal, this Legate of the Pope. "He may be worth naming as a Thomist, but he is an unmeaning, obscure, unintelligent theologian or Christian; and therefore just as fit and proper a man to judge, to investigate, and to decide in this matter as a donkey to play upon a harp." *

He profoundly distrusts Cajetan's honeyed words. "The Cardinal," he says, "calls me always his dear son." He is convinced that the great man's object is to coax or to bully him into a confession of heresy, and thus to have him at his mercy. He is therefore on his guard. "I will not make myself a heretic by contradicting that doctrine through which I became a Christian; rather will I die, rather will I be burnt, rather will I be cast out and be covered with infamy (*vertrieben und vermaledeyet*)." In the end of the letter he bids Carlstadt show it to Amsdorf, to Melanchthon, and other true friends at the University, asking them

* De Wette, 85.

to pray for him and for themselves. "For it is your concern also that is being transacted here—the concern, namely, of faith in Christ and of the grace of God."

From all these letters it is plain that no impression was more deeply engraved upon Luther's mind by his personal dealings with Cajetan and Serralonga than the lamentable and wonderful fact that God had left the government of His Church to such men. Incompetent and unworthy: incompetent in reach of brain and amplitude of knowledge; unworthy in conscience and in heart; incapable of rising to the mere idea and conception of the duties and responsibilities their place required: such was Luther's clear, deliberate, unalterable judgment upon these men. That immortal spirits might be led astray, induced to trust to some sham forgiveness, bought with money, when God Almighty called them to repent—this thought, which thrilled Luther to the marrow of his bones, seemed never to have occurred to these heads of Christ's Church. If the scholastic doctors, in their serene seclusion, drew this distinction and that, marking off the Pope's Indulgence from Divine absolution, could it be seriously pretended that Tetzell was equally guarded in teaching the crowds that followed the tuck of his drum? Was Tetzell the man to instruct simple souls how to draw water from the wells of salvation? These knowing Italians did not value such obsolete talk. "Put money in the Pope's purse!" This, almost without disguise, was for Serralonga all the law and all the prophets. "Don't pester me with your theology. Don't

prate to me about Scripture and the grace of God. We have settled that. Do you promise to obey the Holy Father? If so, be welcomed back and caressed. If not, be condemned." This, nearly as frankly expressed, was for Cajetan the sum of saving knowledge.

We are able to test the accuracy of Luther's account of these transactions by comparing it with a description of the same occurrences presented by Cajetan to Frederick of Saxony. The accounts agree in that inimitable way in which narratives of the same thing, seen by two different observers, where both mean to tell the truth, are found to tally. Luther is not more anxious to make it appear that Cajetan waived discussion than is Cajetan himself. *I* discuss with this insignificant friar! *I* engage in conflict, as a scholastic gladiator, with this pitiful monk!

The idea makes the Prince Cardinal shudder. With clemency, with humanity, Cajetan by his own account had invited Luther to submit; so that Pope and Cardinals might sleep in peace, secure "that he would not," the dog,* "return to his vomit again." To whip Luther back to his convent kennel—that was what the sublime Cajetan would condescend to do. But as for dialectical combat, the idea of his bestowing such an honour on the friar was absurd. Cajetan told the creature that his opinion was not sane. *Obstupui!* I was struck dumb by the assumption of the fellow.

This, *mutatis mutandis*, is exactly what Luther wrote to his confidential friends, Spalatin and Carlstadt, on

* *Ne reverteretur ad vomitum.*—Cajetan's Letter in Loescher.

that fourteenth afternoon of October, when Cajetan, in a towering passion, told him to begone, and, unless he came to recant, never to darken his doors again.

At his second audience with Cajetan, Luther, in presence of a notary, entered a formal protest. "I protest this day that I am not conscious of having said anything contrary to Scripture, the Ecclesiastical Fathers, or the decretals of the Pontiffs, or right reason; and that all which I have this day said seems to me to be sane, true, and catholic (*sana, vera, catholica*)."

CHAPTER V.

PRANDIO FACTO—STAUPITZ AND LINK AS INTERMEDIARIES.

Will the reader kindly transport himself in imagination to Cajetan's audience-chamber in Augsburg, October the 14th, 1518, at that dramatically impressive moment when Martin Luther, in clear danger of being kicked downstairs, took himself off, and the Legate of the Pope remained behind in a towering passion?

In those times men did business early, and when this crisis occurred the day was not much past noon. The fiery Cardinal had not dined. To that operation he now addressed himself; and since "the labour we delight in physics pain," and dining was one of those labours which Pope Leo's Cardinals generally understood, we may infer that he derived from it considerable relief to his agitated feelings. *Prandio facto,** as Luther says, dinner having been despatched, Cajetan began to be less furiously angry, and to be conscious of some impulses of courage and ambition urging him towards a renewal of his enterprise in relation to Luther. Of the man's presence, indeed, he had had enough—and more! On this point his mind was made up. Those glittering eyes—that undisguisable glimpse of irony on

* De Wette, 83.

lip and brow—the idea of again beholding them was insufferable. But the monk's companions, Staupitz and Link, had seemed much less alarming. Their aspect and demeanour, one can well imagine, had been to those of Luther as stillness to storm. Lined in his inner man with good capon, and genially moved with wine, Cajetan resolved that he would try yet again to effect a settlement, and that he would approach Luther through Link and Staupitz.

Accordingly, in the quiet after-dinner hour, "Ecce!" says Luther. Lo and behold! Who should present himself in the Carmelite Convent in which he, along with Staupitz and Link, abode, but a messenger from the Legate inviting Staupitz to an audience. Link accompanied his friend.

Cajetan received Staupitz with a flood of blandishments (*multis blanditiis*). He could not well have made a more judicious choice of an intermediary. Provincial Vicar of the Augustinian Order, Staupitz was officially bound to be loyal to the Pope; officially in a position also to exercise influence, almost or altogether amounting to authoritative injunction, upon Luther. Sincere in his own faith, he was nevertheless able and willing to make himself all things to all men, if by any means he might preserve peace, assuage heartburning, and teach Christians to love one another. In the gilded saloons of the Vatican he had helped the companionable Leo to wing a laggard hour. He had gone on relic-hunting expeditions for Elector Frederick. And yet, as we know, it was he who, in earnest colloquy with

Luther in the seclusion of his cell, opened his eyes to the omnipotence of Divine grace; and he was perfectly trusted, affectionately revered, in the inner circle of the Wittenberg Evangelicals. From him, more than any man, Luther had learned the divine secret, calculated to transform the world, that the sin of sins, the one essential sin, is to doubt the infinite mercy of God in Christ. On him, more than any man, Luther looked as his father in God. To him, in a letter of tenderest Christian communion and confidence, Luther wrote that he would attach to his censure, as that of a true child of God, more weight than to all the thunders of Papal excommunication. If there was any man alive who might be expected to join the hands of Cajetan and Luther, and be the keystone of an arch between Rome and Wittenberg, that man was Staupitz. Of Link it is necessary to say no more than that he was a sincere friend of reformation, and devotedly attached to Luther.

The shower of blandishments having fallen, Cajetan addressed himself to Staupitz. His disposition towards Luther was, he said, amicable, and he begged Staupitz to urge him to accept the easy terms of reconciliation offered by the Pope. If Luther would but recant, all could be arranged.

Staupitz replied with ingenuous plainness that he had tried to soften Luther, but without effect. This brother Martin—he made no secret of the fact—was not the kind of man to be led and guided by him, Staupitz. Would not the most reverend Legate try the effect of another interview? No: Cajetan would not

hear of that. "I don't wish to have more to say to the beast. He has deep eyes, and there are strange speculations in that head of his." * Staupitz and Link must try what they could do.

Staupitz was at his wits' end. More devout and delicate soul than Staupitz breathed not out of heaven. To do good was his delight. The virtues akin to guileless innocence, to humility, to sympathy, to kindness, made his heart their home. But the virtues which are of the family of strength did not accompany them. While the hour of danger had not yet struck, he thought, felt, spoke bravely. So late as last September, when the manifestations of incipient wrath from the Vatican made many hearts in Germany quail, he wrote to Luther in brave terms of sympathy and approbation. He was ready to make common cause with his friend. "Come to me," he had said, "that we may live and die together." When Luther entered Augsburg Staupitz hurried to his side. He was eagerly sympathetic with Luther, keenly critical of his adversaries. When Cajetan betrayed that his supreme anxiety was to conjure away opposition to Indulgences, and that he was comparatively indifferent to the question of faith and sacramental grace, Staupitz at once put his finger on the deadly thing. "A clear proof this," he said, "that Rome cares more for money than for faith and salvation." Nay, he had gone so far as to admonish Luther against giving way. "Remember, dear brother,

* *Habet enim profundos oculos et mirabiles speculationes in capite suo.*

that you have taken up this matter in the name of Jesus,"—an admonition in which Luther expressly says that he heard the voice of God.

But when the danger was actually present, when the air vibrated with alarms, when the ark of God was shaken, Staupitz trembled. He lost his nerve. He took up the matter in a commonplace, compromising, half-and-half fashion. After the first interview between Luther and Cajetan, Staupitz, acting in capacity of Vicar, released Luther from the vows of the Augustinian Order, thus divesting himself and the brethren of responsibility for his opinions. This step was subsequently referred to by Luther as the first failing of Staupitz's faith in the Gospel. "Deliver not the tasks of might to weakness." That is a merciful precept, as well as a just and a wise. Staupitz was good, not great.

Accordingly, instead of rising to the level of the occasion, and calling upon Cajetan not to try to hush up Luther's business, but to acknowledge that he had struck at a hideous abuse, and deserved recognition and approbation, Staupitz allowed himself to be prevailed upon to exert, along with Link, his influence upon Luther to induce him to submit.

And so we march back again to the Carmelite Convent, where Martin, unless his capabilities of detachment were extraordinary (which, however, they were) must have sat awaiting Staupitz and Link in a state of agitation making him good for little in the interval. That he could stand firm as a granite rock,

or as a Nelson line-of-battle ship, giving response to challenges of surrender in cannon-volleys, when it was clear to him that duty so required, need not be said. But in the hands of friends whom he trusted and loved, and when these friends could refer to others in the background in support of their arguments, he was not hard to influence. When with his inner ear he distinctly heard the command, Hitherto and no further, from the lips of God, he was immovable. But he knew that he was constitutionally vehement, and that when roused he was combative to the pitch of passion. Therefore, when he was not absolutely certain that acceptance of peace meant surrender of principle, and when men whom he knew to be good implored him to be yielding, he had great difficulty in drawing the line between resistance and non-resistance.

Staupitz could at present enlarge upon the fearful consequences that might result from a continuation of the conflict with Cajetan. Was Luther prepared for a rending away of Germany from the body of the Church? He assuredly, in the then stage of his evolution as Reformer and Protestant, was not so prepared. What would Frederick think if, after he had exerted himself to procure Luther a trial in Germany, the latter were to meet the earnestly courteous advances of the Legate with sullen repulsion? Was Luther sure, after all, that he was required to give up any essential truth?

Enough. We have no report of the suasive process by which Staupitz, with Link to second, acted upon the mind and heart of Luther; but, if we understand

the men and the situation, we can be liable to no misapprehension as to the main current and drift of his argument. The result was that Luther consented to lower the flag which he seemed to have nailed to the mast, and to be led by the silken cord, adorned with flowers of sentimental rhetoric, which his friends had woven. In other words, he consented to indite a letter and petition to Cajetan, signifying his sorrow for having given offence, and his engagement to follow less divisive and disturbing courses in future. Glancing along the performance, abstracting and paraphrasing its substance, rather than rigorously translating, we shall, perhaps, manage to apprehend how Luther felt on the occasion.

"Again, most Reverend Father in Christ, I approach you, not indeed in person, but by letter. Deign, most Reverend Paternity, to give me clement audience. Our reverend Vicar, my sweetest Father in Christ, John Staupitz, has dealt with me to bring me to a due humbleness of feeling, surrender of opinion, and submissiveness of mind, exuberantly setting forth the graciousness of your disposition towards me. Both the theme and the spokesman were marvellously adapted to cheer and encourage. Such and so great is this man in my eyes that there is no one in the world whom I should more willingly hear and obey. With equal assiduity did my dearest brother, Martin Wenzel Link, who from early years was my companion in study, act upon me. In short, it was not possible for your most Reverend Paternity to influence me more forcibly or more sweetly

than by these two mediators, either of whom has me in the hollow of his hand.* So great is at once thy humanity and thy judiciousness; by which I perceive that your most Reverend Paternity seeks not mine but me; for you might have overborne me by power alone. Now, therefore, my fear vanishes, or rather is changed into a singular swell of love and filial regard towards your most Reverend Paternity.

"I confess, then, most Reverend Father in Christ, as I have confessed on other occasions, that I have certainly been indiscreet, sharp, and irreverent in my references to the supreme Pontiff. True, I was most sharply provoked to this irreverence; but, all the same, it was my part, as I now comprehend, to handle the matter more modestly, humbly, and reverently, and not to answer foolish assailants in their own manner. On which account I most sincerely grieve and ask pardon; and I shall make publicly known the change in all pulpits, as I have with some frequency done already, and shall on the whole take pains, with the merciful help of God, to be different and to speak differently. In fact, I have no hesitation or difficulty in promising that I shall, for the future, avoid touching on the matter of Indulgences, and shall silently regard them as past and done with; provided only that the same rule, whether in respect of speech or of silence, be imposed upon those whose proceedings forced me to move in this tragical business."

So far Luther, in the way of apology, confession,

* *In solidum me habet in manu suâ.*—De Wette, 86.

and promise of amendment. He is very sorry. He will behave better in future. He will let Indulgences alone, knowing that the authoritative teaching of the Church on the subject is, in essentials, on his side, and making it a condition that the Tetzellian preaching of Indulgences, the preaching of them so as to mislead simple souls, shall not be persisted in. Is this all, then, that Cajetan, as represented by Link and Staupitz, wishes to be touched upon? No. A matter of vital consequence remains. Luther has said nothing of recantation. And he knows that if he passed this over the whole thing would be a sham.

Accordingly, "My most Reverend and now most sweet Father in Christ," he resumes, "I should most willingly, both under your command and advice and under those of my Vicar, recant everything, if by any means my conscience permitted. But this is indispensable. By the injunction of no man, by the advice of no man, by the favour of no man, can I be warranted to say or to do anything against conscience." In one word, he will not recant.

And so the hawser snaps after all. This fighting Téméraire which, in view of the smiling Cajetan, was being so deftly towed to its last berth by the assiduous tugs, Link and Staupitz, falls off into the open sea, to brave, as before, the battle and the breeze.

For the rest, Luther frankly declares that his conscience is not likely to be satisfied by arguments from Aquinas. But he owns the authority of the Church, when the Church can really be heard. The true voice

of the Bride speaks, he says, for the Bridegroom. In conclusion, therefore, he begs "with all humility" that Cajetan will refer his cause to our most holy lord, Pope Leo, so that those points which are really in doubt may be determined, and a just recantation, or a just acceptation, may be enforced.

Such was the letter composed on this occasion by Luther, under the influence of Link and Staupitz, and in reply to the appeal made by Cajetan to him through them. It represents the position they took up and the effect they produced. It is courteous and compliant in circumstantials; in essentials it yields nothing. But there is no evidence that the letter was written in their presence or submitted to their inspection. In conversation with Luther they ascertained how far he would go, and the point at which he would peremptorily refuse to go farther. They became aware, therefore, either on the same day, the 14th of the month, on which they had been called to the presence of Cajetan, or on the following day, that their mission was a failure. On the 14th Luther, under the advice of shrewd friends and accomplished jurists whom wise Frederick found for him in Augsburg, had drawn up a concise and energetic appeal from the Pope ill-informed to the Pope better informed. This instrument, executed in legal form and attested by notarial signature, Luther kept by him, though doubtless aware that Cajetan would hear of it. He alludes to it in his letter of that date to Spalatin, a letter in which he makes no mention of a letter written, or which

he intended to write, at the suggestion of Staupitz and Link. These, we may presume, would be perfectly aware of the existence of the appeal to the Pope, and would recognise in it a proof, additional to those furnished by Luther's conversation, that their attempt at mediation had failed.

They were therefore in an unpleasant predicament. They could not return to Cajetan, for they could not tell him that Luther was willing to recant. But they shrank from casting in their lot unreservedly with Luther. They were appalled at the idea of coming to a direct breach with the heads of the Church. Besides, if they remained in Augsburg, held off from Cajetan, and were understood to be thorough-going adherents of Luther, they might, they believed, expose themselves to personal danger. Staupitz was Provincial Vicar, Link was a Prior of the Augustinian Order, but above both was Gabriel Venetus, General of the Augustinians, a man wholly in the interest of the Pope, a zealot stern and true, who had been told, so long ago as last February, to keep an eye on the obnoxious monk. Among the rumours with which Augsburg buzzed in those agitating days, one was to the effect that the General of the Augustinian Order had given his permission, in the event of Luther's finally refusing to recant, that he should be thrown into chains.*

Naturally, being good men, but not of the heroic order, Staupitz and Link fell into a state of trepidation,

* De Wette, 95.

of vacillation. One is pained to find Staupitz playing a sorry part. Manliness and courtesy required that he should have reported to Cajetan on the success or the failure of the embassage he had undertaken. Had he gone with Luther's letter to Cajetan, we may be sure that the Cardinal would have given him a courteous reception, and we cannot be sure that the Legate would have pronounced Luther's terms inadmissible.

There can be no reasonable doubt that Cajetan and Cajetan's master were much more sincerely inclined to an accommodation than Luther and the German friends of Luther gave them credit for. Supremely able in all circumstances in which he had the facts of the case clearly before him, Luther possessed no exact knowledge of the facts which, at this juncture in European history, bore upon his relations to Pope Leo. He did not realise—though the despatch of the Golden Rose to Germany, with announced intent of its being bestowed upon Frederick, might have opened his eyes to the fact—that Leo was more concerned to conciliate the Elector than to put down heresy. The Pope had indeed committed himself, long ere now, by declarations against Luther. Cajetan was alive to the bearing of this circumstance upon Papal prestige when he pressed so obstinately for a recantation. But the documents in which Leo had committed himself were not yet known to the great world, and Cajetan may be credited with so much of the instinct and insight of a statesman as to know that they would have little practical effect. All the Pope cared for was to save appearances.

Staupitz and Link, unequal to the occasion, decided upon the ignoble course of giving Cajetan the slip and skulking out of Augsburg. It was a pitiful return for the courtesy which he had shown them. He was deeply wounded, thinking it strange that the high-born, gentle, complaisant Staupitz should steal suddenly away without a word of farewell. On the 16th of October they disappeared. The letter which we have seen, embodying the result of their negotiation with Luther, was sent by some ordinary messenger to Cajetan. It could hardly be expected, under those circumstances, to have any effect; and it had none.

CHAPTER VI.

FAREWELL TO CAJETAN.

Luther also now felt that the time had come when it were well to put a wider distance between himself and the Cardinal. He did not depart, however, without the courtesy of leave-taking. He could not, indeed, wait upon Cajetan, who had bidden him begone and not to return without a recantation on his lips, but he addressed to him a letter. Recounting, in brief and dignified terms, what had taken place, he submitted that it was now fit that he should depart. He had proved, he said, the alacrity of his obedience by coming a great distance, at much inconvenience and not without danger, weak in body and utterly poor, solely in order to comply with the mandate of the Pope. He had fallen at the Cardinal's feet, prepared to accept condemnation or approbation at his hand, and was conscious of having omitted nothing that it behoved an obedient son of the Church to do. Were he now to remain in Augsburg he would simply waste time, besides making himself a burden to the Carmelite friars. Had not the most Reverend Paternity himself said that if he would not recant he should see his face no more? And on the point of recantation he had repeatedly and finally spoken. Not deserving censure,

he did not fear it, having, by the grace of God, learned that censure does a man no harm; nay, does him good, when faith and truth are on his side. "Wherefore, by the bowels of Christ, and by the signal clemency which you have shown to me, I entreat you to recognise graciously, as thorough and complete, and to make known with kind commendation to our most holy lord the Pope, the obedience I have manifested."*

It is nothing less than fair that the distinct admission made by Luther in this letter that he had been treated with signal clemency should be placed to Cajetan's credit. It was not of the personal demeanour of the Pope's representative that he complained. Except when, under severe provocation, Cajetan lost his temper, he treated Luther courteously. What the latter complained of was his dogged refusal to argue the question in dispute fairly, fully, and on its merits.

Having resolved to quit Augsburg, Luther was anxious that the place and hour of his departure should not be proclaimed from the house-tops. He looked with perhaps exaggerated suspicion on the Italians, and though his German countrymen were, for the most part, amicably disposed towards him, there were some on his own side of the Alps who regarded him with bitter hatred. Whisperings had reached his ear of fanatical bravoes, capable of tracking the footsteps of a pestilent heretic, and dealing with him in a very summary manner. He thought it wise, therefore, to leave Augsburg even more quietly than he had entered it. On

* De Wette, 87.

the morning of Wednesday, the 20th of October, so early that the dawn had not begun to touch the landscape, he got upon horseback, accoutred only in his monkish garb, unbooted, unspurred; and looked for an outlet from the city. Protestant hero-worship, prosily maundering in after years, provided an angel to open for him a portal in the wall. The duskier and huskier myth-makers on the *other* side alleged that his father and particular friend the devil considered the occasion important enough to attend in person. The unadorned, undistorted fact is that an Augsburg friend, of the name of Langemantel, showed him a little gate in the city wall. He did not loiter in his journey. After a ride of thirty-two miles without rest, he drew bridle in the village of Monheim, well on the way to Nuremberg. So complete was his exhaustion that he sank down as one dead on the straw in the stable.

Arrived at Nuremberg, and in the midst of sympathetic friends, he made some brief pause in his homeward journey. An important despatch from Spalatin now reached him. It contained, *inter alia*, a Papal brief, dated the 23rd of August, in which what purported to be Cajetan's latest instructions were given to him in view of his proceedings against Luther. As he glanced over it his eyes may be supposed to have flashed with anger, qualified by incredulity and amazement. He well remembered that he had asked Cajetan, at their first interview, to inform him precisely of the nature of the instructions under which he was acting, and that the Cardinal had carefully avoided compliance

with the request. If the Papal brief now in his hands was genuine, the cause of that refusal became too plain. He had considered it an act of palpable unfairness when Pope Leo summoned him to the bar of a judge who was his controversial opponent. But in this brief, even the sixty days of grace which were to elapse before his trial by Prierias were ignored, and his condemnation as a heretic was treated as a foregone conclusion. Cajetan was simply instructed, in the event of Luther's refusing to recant, to have him arrested and conveyed to Rome. Princes and municipal authorities were enjoined to render the Legate all necessary assistance in carrying out this purpose, and severe penalties were denounced against such as should harbour the heretic.

Towards the supreme Pontiff Luther had striven to maintain a sentiment of loyal hope. Was it credible, he asked himself, that such a brief should be authentic? He refused to believe it. Recurring to the wild and waggish crew whose object it was to laugh to scorn the Church and all her ministers, he decided that the brief was a forgery emanating from their workshop. In this opinion he was wrong; the brief was unquestionably Leo's, although a charitable doubt may be suggested as to its having reached Cajetan before his meeting with Luther.

Revolving many thoughts in his head, Martin pushed on for Wittenberg. In Graefenthal, near Coburg, the tedium of the way was broken by a *rencontre* with Albert, Count of Mansfeld, one of his friends and adherents, whom it is pleasant to think of as a link

between the now famous Doctor and stout old John Luther and Margaret Luther, of Mansfeld Valley. The Count, who had probably never seen Luther on horseback before, laughed heartily at the figure he cut, and insisted that he should not go on his way until after taking part in some social festivity. Albert was an observant, wide-awake man, who might be able to give Luther important pieces of information, gleaned in his journeys about the country. Luther, good company at all times, would be specially entertaining when fresh from the presence of the would-be majestic Cajetan and the frisky Serralonga.

On the first anniversary of the posting up of the Theses, he was again in Wittenberg. The same day he wrote to Spalatin. He has got home, he says, but does not know how long he may remain, and mentions his intention of appealing to a Council. His experiences have not distressed him, and he is "full of joy and peace." Reverting to Augsburg, he admits the personal "benevolence and clemency" of Cajetan, but questions his sincerity. As for the brief which Spalatin had sent him, it was, if authentic, not "apostolical," but "diabolical." He takes it, however, to be the work of some scamp, who would befool both the Pope and himself.*

As for his Roman enemies, he throws out the hint that they have begun to distrust their power to crush him, and display a "marvellous ingenuity in seeking evasions." May this not be a glance penetrating to the

* De Wette, 88.

heart of Cajetan's mystery? The hypothesis it suggests is that the Cardinal, having measured the task which he came from Italy to execute, had changed his mind as to how it could be performed. Leo, in his frivolity, had reeled like a drunken man, from blunder to blunder. His first blunder was to think Luther's concern a mere squabble among monks. His second blunder was to bid Prierias meddle with it. His third was to instruct Cajetan to send Luther to Rome as a manifest heretic. But Cajetan, when he found himself in Germany, and understood Luther's position, had perceived that this plan was unworkable. If the monk could have been cajoled into recantation and self-effacement, all would have been well; but since peace on these terms was impossible, might not some decent compromise be effected, and would not almost any compromise be better than open war or undisguised failure? In one word, had he not, in his heart, desired "evasion" as the second best thing to victory? Hence his judicious resort to Staupitz, and his bitter disappointment when Staupitz and Link proved too weak for the business and left him in the lurch. Hence, too, his loudly expressed regret and soreness when Luther also decamped, without waiting to know what was the *ultimatum ultimatissimum* of the Pope's representative.

CHAPTER VII.

JOHN FROG'S DINNER.

In the last paragraph of the letter to Spalatin of which we have been speaking, Luther takes up a little matter which, though altogether insignificant as compared with the world-celebrated meeting of monk and Cardinal at Augsburg, casts a ray of pleasantly illuminative light upon the character and ways of Martin, and will be to us something of relief amid these big historical affairs.

In Augsburg he had put up at the Carmelite Convent. Johannes Frosch, *Anglicé* John Frog, the Carmelite Prior, had been all that was possible in the way of hospitality and kindness. Before or about the time of Luther's quitting Augsburg, John Frog mentioned to him, first, that it was his intention to take his degree as Doctor of Theology in Wittenberg; and, secondly, that Frederick, the Elector, had promised to stand the honorary dinner of which Frog and his friends would, according to custom, partake on that occasion. Luther, always proudly loyal to his Prince, and sure of his generosity, replied to Frog with genial frankness: "Come, by all means; never doubt that it will be right

if the Prince has promised. What he has said will be done."

These details Luther now places before Spalatin, whose footing of confidential friendship with Frederick makes him all-potent in the case. "See then," adds Luther, "that what Frog hopes for shall be honourably accorded him." These circumstances, though slight, enable us to realise the friendliness and faithfulness of our Martin, and to feel that, while the noises of danger and revolution were in the air around him, his inner man was calm and unruffled.

But Spalatin, as those versed in human nature will be prepared to expect, did not manifest a vivid enthusiasm in Frog and his entertainment. Accordingly, eight days after the date of this first letter to his friend after returning from Augsburg, Luther finds it necessary to revert to the subject. Here, my Spalatin, is the illustrious Frog, actually present in Wittenberg, and going about everywhere proclaiming that the Prince promised him an honorary dinner. Luther has been making inquiries, and the result showed that he was in a position demanding the most delicate tact. Any syllable of cross-questioning addressed to Frog on the subject of the Prince's promise, its date, occasion, accompanying incidents, was, by the mere instinct of chivalrous friendship in Luther, barred. If the promise was clear in Frederick's recollection there could be no difficulty; but—probably from his finely accurate appreciation of Frederick's character, assisted by his sagacity and his experience of men—it seems to have

struck Luther that this might not be the case. By cautious inquiries — "obliquely waddling to the end in view"*—he learned that Frederick had but a hazy recollection of the matter, was, in fact, "ignorant or dubious of the promise" made to Frog.

Consider, then, the problem *in re* Frog that Luther had on hand. He was engaged, remember, all this time, in drawing up accounts and defences of his proceedings at Augsburg, of immense consequence for himself and the world; and his position in relation to the Pope was, to say the least, profoundly agitating. He had not a shadow of doubt—being, though a peasant born, yet a perfect gentleman, a knight of the golden heart—that Frog was truthful, and that Frederick also was truthful. He knew that memory is much at the mercy of chance, and that the tablets of the brain retain or lose impressions in accordance with many and subtle conditions. In some gathering at Augsburg, where the important and courted Elector was crowded on by hundreds who each expected a word from his lip, Frog had doubtless managed to find a favourable moment for rounding into Frederick's ear that he, Frog, meant to apply for his Doctor's degree at Wittenberg; and equally certain was it that Frederick, probably with a beaming smile, had made Frog the happiest of men by seeming greatly delighted, and exclaiming, "Oh! charmed to hear it! We shall make a Doctor of you, and I shall

* *Exploravi enim oblique rei certitudinem.*—De Wette, 90. It is interesting to note how Luther and Pope, both masters in language, use the same word—"Obliquely waddling toward the end in view." Assuredly Pope never saw Luther's letter.

stand the dinner." And so Frog has had his turn, and passes on obeisant, his memory electrified into vividest recollection, so long as life should last, of this Elysian hour. Frederick, for his part, influenced by a polite impulse, might have been at the moment sincere enough, and yet, before the end of a weary day, might have become unable to say what it was he had promised to Frog, or even to be sure that he had made any promise.

Oh, for a pen competent to analyse the delicacy of Luther's situation! It would pain Frog to know that the Prince was oblivious of a promise so magnificently memorable to himself. Not the remotest hint on that subject, therefore, is to be permitted to reach him. He must be feasted, and his friend, the Prior of Nuremberg, whom he expects to join him, must be feasted also. Never, by word or look, did our Martin give Frog the hint that not Frederick, or Spalatin, but the Doctor, had saved Frog from disappointment. Having experienced friendliness in Augsburg, he was not to be beaten in friendliness in Wittenberg. We have seen him writing twice to Spalatin about Frog. But he wrote oftener than that. At one time the project of the Doctorial feast seemed really hopeless. Frog could not have his dinner at the palace. Nor could it be given him at the University. Luther canvassed his friends in Wittenberg to see whether there was not some one that would undertake the business. No; there was none. The honour of honouring Frog did not stir the ambition of the Wittenberg bur-

gesses in those dim November days. Still, as Luther writes to Spalatin, a man in the highest degree worthy of honour (*dignissimus*) must not be left unhonoured, and the promise of a Prince, our Saxon Prince, must not be broken. Rather than that, we must startle the monastic silences, and let the cloisters of our own convent attest the Doctorial majesty of Frog. The thing cannot be done without great difficulty. We are truly poor; the company will be large; we cannot possibly defray the affair without help. If the Prince will send us a supply of venison, we shall perhaps pull through.

And so at last, our Martin being a conquering kind of man, Frog has his degree of Doctor and his dinner, nor does it appear that venison or anything else was lacking. The honour of Frederick was saved, the heart of Frog was gladdened, and the whole was due to Martin Luther.

Almost any man would have felt that this was as much, and more than as much, as he could feel himself called upon to do for Frog. But the genial warmth of our Martin was not exhausted. Hitherto he had been, so far as Frog was concerned, an almost unseen actor in the play. Frog supposed himself to be the man whom the Prince was delighting to honour. But Luther chose to do something in his own name towards the delectation of the most worthy Prior. Accordingly, on the evening of the day when Frog had been invested with the dignity of Doctor, he was entertained, in a modest manner we need not doubt, but with royal sincerity and geniality, by Martin himself. At the morning

celebration Luther's keen eye had noted the absence of Melanchthon, but he was determined that this star—the newest and, save one, the brightest in the Wittenberg constellation—should not, if he could help it, withhold its shining from Frog in the evening. Accordingly he writes, in the afternoon, a note of invitation to the big-browed stripling who is one of the first Greek scholars in Europe. "To-day you treated with contempt—may the Muse and Apollo forgive you!—both me and (so they call him) the new little Doctor. I have pardoned you, but if you do not appear here within this hour, not even your supremacy in Greek will excuse you. The new little Doctor facetiously remarks that he, a Barbarian, is meanly reputed by you, a Greek. Mind what you are about! I have given a promise that you will most certainly come. You will have satisfied my claim if you come, but I should be wonderfully pleased if you brought Professors Veit and Schwertfeger with you. For, this evening, I am to be host, and they are my most intimate and dearest friends."*

Thanks to you, John Frog, most worthy Prior of the Augsburg Carmelites, who had the good fortune to show kindness to Martin Luther, to get a promise from Frederick the Wise, and to sit as guest at a table where Melanchthon was at your elbow and Doctor Luther your host. You have helped us to get very close to Martin, and to realise in an infallible way how he possessed his soul in patience and moved among men

* De Wette, 93.

with light, buoyant, steady step, when Rome was mustering her legions against him. Not a shrieking fanatic at all, but a sober-minded, well-conditioned, thoroughly reasonable and clubbable man, with extraordinary powers of detachment and of doing many things at once and yet doing them all well.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAJETAN WRITES TO THE ELECTOR.

Cardinal Cajetanus, when he found that Staupitz had gone without taking leave, and that the singular friar with the glittering eyes had more politely disappeared, was visited by some of that wrath from which even the celestial minds of Princes of the Church are not exempt. He was not without tenacity of purpose, and did not yet admit to himself that his defeat was hopeless. But he had exhausted his stock of sunny smiles and sugared phrases, and he would now unfold, somewhat more boldly, the resources of his anger.

Seizing his pen, therefore, he indited a letter to the Elector Frederick, entreating and instructing him, as a ruler in Germany and a devout and dutiful son of the Church, to proceed against those who were troubling Zion. With petulant vivacity, not without show of logic, he inveighed against Staupitz and Luther for stealing away from Augsburg; descanted on his own superlative clemency and fatherliness in dealing with the refractory monk; and called upon Frederick to deliver up the latter for transmission to Rome, or, at lowest, to expel him from the Electoral dominions.

Gathering up the robes of his dignity, he is careful

to assure the Elector that he, Legate of the Pope and famed controversialist, had not deigned to enter the arena with a beggarly little friar.* He had merely condescended to explain to the man that he was egregiously in the wrong, which explanation the benighted and perverse creature had declined to regard as satisfactory. Neither the fatherliness of his, Cajetan's, demeanour, nor the cogency of his arguments, had availed, and the time had now come to let the obdurate heretic know that the Church could strike.

Sincerely religious according to his lights, accepting, like all his contemporaries, the doctrine, venerable with the assent of more than a thousand years, that the heretic ought to be slain, and not in the least disposed to come to a breach with the Church, Frederick had to consider how he would deal with this letter. An answer it clearly deserved. But justice as clearly required that the man at whose name and fame, and indeed at whose life, it was aimed, should have sight of it, and should be heard in regard to it. Frederick was not a brilliantly clever man, nor an ambitiously inventive man; but he might have been called the Just at least as appropriately as the Wise. He forwarded Cajetan's letter to Luther.

* Loescher. "In the former editions," says Robertson in the eleventh edition of his "History of Charles V.," "I asserted, upon the authority of Father Paul, that Cajetan thought it beneath his dignity to enter into any dispute with Luther; but M. Beausobre, in his "Histoire de la Réformation," vol. i., p. 121, &c., has satisfied me that I was mistaken." Had Robertson consulted the original accounts of the interviews, whether by Luther or by Cajetan, he might have seen that Father Paul and Beausobre were both right, but that neither had realised the *whole* fact. Cajetan would not engage in formal controversy with Luther—oh, dear, no!—but the two men got into dispute for all that.

With much else on his hands, not to mention the running and arranging in the Frog affair, Martin took it up and replied to it in a manner so calm, so terse, so masterly, that we might well imagine the composition to have been his sole business. On the 19th of November, the day after he did the honours to Frog, his answer was ready. It takes the form of a letter to Frederick.*

As we read it, the first thought likely to occur is that it furnishes a curiously pertinent and convincing proof that two reports of the same transaction, differing greatly from each other, may be written by the same man, and he an honest man, each of the divergent accounts being substantially correct. Addressing his sovereign and all the world, Luther writes with a studious moderation and dignity, in strong contrast to the impetuous haste and vehemence of the letters dashed off for Spalatin and Carlstadt when he had just left the presence of Cajetan. But he wrote truthfully then, and he writes truthfully now.

Of the personal courtesy of the Cardinal there is, of course, ample acknowledgment. The particulars connected with his demand that Luther should recant are specified with a minute accuracy not required in the former letters. They ranged themselves under three heads: first, that he should return to loyal obedience and repudiate his errors; second, that he should promise to abstain from such in future; third, that he should desist from and abandon all courses tending to disquiet

* De Wette, 95.

the Church. Being asked to relinquish his errors, he begged for illumination as to what those errors were. Cajetan mentioned the opinion, affirmed by Luther, that faith on the part of the recipient of a sacrament is necessary to its efficacy. To Frederick, as to Cajetan, Luther respectfully intimates that, on this point, he cannot change. Rightly so: the point was vital. If the consecrating formula of the priest could make the sacrament an unfailing channel of salvation, irrespectively of the spiritual state of him who received it—irrespectively, that is to say, of the grace of God vitalising the soul with Divine fire—then salvation was of the priest, and the entire system of mediæval theology stood inviolate and inviolable. If, on the other hand, the grace of God, accepted by faith, renews and saves the soul, whether by means of the sacrament or without the sacrament, then this truth of truths ought to be made as clear as the sun at noon, and every mist-wreath obscuring it ought to be swept away. On this point he will, to save his life, make no concession. Cajetan had professed himself able to controvert the doctrine from Holy Writ, but this, Luther says, he wholly failed to do. "I await, I entreat, I implore so much as one word of Scriptural authority against my position." Then, with the earnestness of faith, of affection, of loyalty, he makes a personal appeal to Frederick. "To you, most illustrious Prince, I shall speak out of the fulness of my heart. I grieve with my whole soul that this essential principle of our faith is held in the Church to be not only doubtful and unknown, but even false. Do

with my reply on other points what you will. Call it false; say it is expressly opposed to a *dictum* of Pope Clement; say it demands condemnation and recantation. I may see my way to assent to all this if seemliness requires; but, best of Princes, I protest, in the presence of God and His angels, that in the hour of death I will confess this doctrine, and will recant all things before recanting it." In one word, "If I deny this doctrine, I deny Christ."

Luther's intense earnestness in this matter had evidently perplexed Cajetan. The accomplished Thomist seems to have suspected some mystical or pantheistic opinion of explicitly heretical import. Such is the interpretation I put upon his words when he distinguishes Luther's delinquencies into, first, those which were committed against the Holy See; and, secondly, those which were "*damnabilia*." The distinction appears to have surprised and puzzled Luther himself. He had, as yet, been formally accused only in respect of his views and preachings on Indulgences, which belonged to a comparatively external region; it was new to him to hear a Cardinal hinting that, in relation to fundamental truth, he cherished damnable heresies. Cajetan does not explain his use of the word, but it is hard to conceive that he means anything else than that Luther was a bringer-in of wild and subtle theories. It is not improbable that a similar thought was in Cajetan's head when he told Staupitz he wanted to see the "beast" no more, for he had "wonderful speculations in the head of him." Cajetan, in fact, had a surmise—perfectly just, and

creditable to his intellectual discernment—that the differences between Luther and the Church of Rome were deeper than had yet appeared.

But if this had occurred to Cajetan—the thought being suppressed during the episode of Staupitz's mediation, and cropping up again in Cajetan's letter to Frederick—was it not likely that some idea of the same nature should occur to Luther with reference to the apprehension, or misapprehension, of Divine truth by the Cardinal? If we turn for a moment from the reply of Luther to Cajetan, addressed to Frederick, and glance at another and much shorter which he flung upon paper, on that same 19th of November, for the eye of Spalatin, we shall find that Luther's estimate of Cajetan's theology was as low as Cajetan's estimate of Luther's. The letter to his bosom friend is splendidly impulsive, perfectly confidential, and his scorn for the "most reverend Legate" flashes out unmasked. The most reverend had, he says, uttered things showing the profoundest ignorance of theology—*propositiones atheologissimas*, which, if any one else had uttered them, he, Luther, would have pronounced the rankest heresy.*

The plain fact seems to be that in the Court of Leo the Tenth, in the early part of the sixteenth century, the Pauline doctrine of free and omnipotent grace had become a startling paradox, a perplexing mystery, or a damnable heresy. Luther may very well have thrown out observations on the indwelling of God in the soul, on the irresistibility of creative grace, on the

* De Wette, 94.

spiritual nullity of human merit, which the Master of Sentences, or the Angelic Doctor, or St. Bernard, or Dr. Newman, would have recognised as theologically accurate, but which struck the self-satisfied Cardinal as deadly. This man, thought Luther, who tries to browbeat me into recantation, is but a sciolist and smatterer in Catholic theology. And this is the theological Pharos and tower of strength of the Dominicans, this their Prince of Princes, *princeps principissimus*, in doctrine! After him, but still esteemed to be theologian enough to crush Luther, marched Sylvester, our old friend Prierias. "You know him," says Luther to Spalatin. "What are the tenths or the hundredths, in order of merit, if this is the first and this the second?" His heart would be lifted up but for the depressing pathos of the whole affair—men losing pains and time in miserably useless studies, ever learning, and attaining only to the wretchedest ignorance; Christ, the true light of the world, banished from their schools, and Aristotle reigning in malarious fog. "Now, at all events, I have seen and taken the measure of the two lions of Moab, as says the Scripture: shall I at all fear the hares of Moab? Christ, Christ, Christ, for ever!"

CHAPTER IX.

FREDERICK WRITES TO CAJETAN.

There still remained to Luther, after the despatch of his answer to Cajetan's letter to Frederick, some six weeks of the year 1518. They were weeks of incessant activity, of intense agitation, during which the theatre of his mind represented, in miniature, those revolutionary throes that were beginning to shake Europe.

His experience at Augsburg had profoundly affected him. He was amazed and appalled by the idea that such men as Pope Leo and his satellites should rule the Church of Christ. New and terrible thoughts crowded on him as he mused, impelling him to new audacities of enterprise and utterance. Writing to Link in those weeks, he refers to his state of mind in a tone of solemn earnestness, as if meaning to suggest that he was urged on by an influence superior to his own purpose and will. "I know not," he says, "whence come these meditations." * Already he suspects that the Antichrist foretold by St. Paul is seated in the Roman Curia. He has difficulties of many kinds, difficulties from his foes, difficulties from his friends. He is convinced—perhaps a shade more firmly convinced than is warranted by facts —that, though the words of his Italian adversaries may

* De Wette, 100.

be softer than butter, yet are they drawn swords. In Germany, he is equally sure, some regard him with a bitter and burning hatred. "I am on the outlook for men sent to kill me from Rome or some other quarter." Perhaps he exaggerated his personal danger. Leo was too accomplished a politician, too cool-headed a man of the world, to want to have Luther's blood on his hands. With an awakening world around him; with men like Erasmus, Reuchlin, Hutten, making public opinion a reality; with a hundred printing-presses getting into play, each a small volcano casting up light and fire, not without thunder, and accompaniment, hardly less dangerous, of vapour, smoke, and mud, Leo could not fail to appreciate the difficulty and peril of attempting to take the life of Luther. The Popes, in point of fact, had been indirect rather than direct promoters of the execution of heretics. Huss was slain by a Council, which also dealt severely with a Pope.

But Luther was perfectly correct in believing that the Roman authorities were bent upon extinguishing him and his doctrine. Once decoyed to Rome, the Saxon monk might at first have been trifled with, and then, when the restless world was engaged with some new interest, quietly dungeoned for life. At best he might have been allowed to make sport for the Philistines by engaging champion after champion of the Papacy in wordy war. As one went down, another would come up—any number for Leo; and the discussion might have been protracted until even Luther was worn out, or until all men were tired of the

subject. He showed his discernment and sound sense by firmly resolving that nothing would induce him to place himself in the Pope's power. Careful to secure the legality of his position by having in hand a technically irreproachable appeal to a Council—road-ready to take flight at any moment for France if the alguazils of the Inquisition made their appearance, his farewell to his congregation actually spoken, though with the explanation that it was to be taken hypothetically, since he might, but also might not, depart without further announcement—he waited in faith and patience, conscious that he had done his part. His loins girt, his staff in his hand, he was ready, as he told friend Spalatin, to go forth "like Abraham, not knowing whither, or rather knowing most certainly whither; for God is everywhere." *

Time did not hang heavy on his hands, nor did a sense of danger introduce disorder into his habits, or paralysis into his activity. The affairs of the University received his constant and lively attention. It warmed his heart to observe the ardour with which the professors and students took his part. The bleak town on the Elbe glowed and buzzed with enthusiasm for Luther, for the Bible, for the Gospel of the grace of God. He carried on the war against scholasticism in Wittenberg without pause or mitigation. Aristotle and his retinue of sects, Thomists and Scotists, he drives before him with relentless vigour. Magister Ginkel must give up lecturing on Thomist physics. Magister Premsel must shut up what Luther inexorably considers

* De Wette, 96.

his quibble-shop of Thomist logic. The Scotist philosophy and logic may linger a little longer, but Luther has his eye on them too, and they will have to go. The very names, he cries aloud in his iconoclastic fervour, of these useless and distressing systems must perish. Unadulterated philosophy, Divine theology, and all sound culture of the mind, *omnesque matheses,* will then be drawn from their original fountains. Professors and students answer with acclamation to his reforming appeals. The streets of Wittenberg are thronged with the aspiring youth of Germany, who step briskly yet soberly along, their faces glistening as with the light of an ideal morning, the music of hope and promise—that hope of infinite bettering for the world by which it is youth's privilege to be gloriously beguiled—in their ears.*

The affectionate confidence of young men in the cause of reformation and in himself greatly cheered Luther. His intrepidity, his fearlessness, the elevation of his aims—as high above all sordid motives as the flight of the frigate bird, ten thousand feet in air, is above the sea—the decisive wholeness and heartiness of his purposes, views, words—his imaginative fire and rugged eloquence—his undeniable pugnacity and truly German sympathy with the joy of battle,—these, and not less than these his ardent friendliness, his genial gifts of familiarity, his love of flute-music and of a good laugh—endeared him to ingenuous youth.

Keenly alive to the interests of the University, he was conscious also, with the intuition of an epoch-

* Luther's letters of the period, *passim.*

making man, of what was required of him as a reformer of doctrine and deliverer of the Church. The duty and necessity of keeping himself in touch with the ever-increasing crowd that now, in all German lands, and far beyond, began to hail him as a leader of God's host, he vividly apprehended. He would not put his light under a bushel. He tells Spalatin frankly that if he remains in Wittenberg he will insist upon liberty of speech and writing. He would rather become an exile than forego his freedom in delivering his message. Hence arose not a little of the delicacy and difficulty of his position; for there were kind friends who wanted him to consult his safety by a careful avoidance of all utterance that might give offence to Rome.

Frederick was at heart true to him and proud of him, but looked upon him with anxiety. Solicitous for his safety, he nevertheless commissioned Spalatin to tell him that he should prefer him to be elsewhere. He strenuously endeavoured to restrain the Doctor's ardour in the matter of publication. Loyal to Frederick in his heart of hearts, and fully able to appreciate the value of his protection, Luther, nevertheless, chafed at the thought that people might say he was loud and aggressive only because Frederick enabled him to offend with impunity. It seriously vexed him also to reflect that association with himself might prejudice the interests of his Prince. Most willingly would he take all responsibility upon his own shoulders. When Spalatin, therefore, prompted by Frederick, entreats or enjoins him to refrain from publishing accounts of his interviews

with Cajetan, or his appeal to a Council, or any other document likely to keep alive the ferment in men's minds and cause trouble with Rome, he yields only a half-hearted and defective obedience. He excused himself, no doubt, on plausible grounds, but if he had been as earnestly opposed to publication as Frederick was, there would have been no need of excuses. He threw the blame upon others; but when he was in earnest people took care not to give him occasion for blame. That rascal printer! The specious varlet, *suis lucris intentus*, thinking only of his gains, sold almost all the copies; and I, poor unconscious innocent, was the last to learn that they might be bought! *Fui satis in eum stomachatus*, my stomach was sufficiently up against him; * but the thing was done. "I could not undo the fact." In short, though inexpressibly desirous to show all due deference to the wishes of Frederick, Luther could not and would not thrust out of sight those writings which were eagerly looked for from him as leader of the reform movement in Germany, the man who had stepped into the breach and called on all Christian men and Germans to follow him.

Frederick, to his credit, was too worthy of having such a subject not to act towards him with magnanimous forbearance. We saw with what noble openness and justice he sent on to Luther the letter of Cajetan, in which this pitiful friarkin, *fraterculus*, who set himself up as monitor of Popes and Cardinals, was pointed out as a fit object for Frederick's wrath.

* De Wette, 103.

We saw also that Luther prepared a masterly reply to Cajetan's letter, and that, in forwarding this reply to Spalatin, he accompanied it with a few strictly confidential, eminently pertinent words to Spalatin himself. Our wide-awake Martin, cognisant of the ways of princes and of chaplains, pointedly instructs his friend that he is to be no mere postman on the occasion. "See you to it now that the most illustrious Prince either reads this letter or hears it read." Spalatin, in whose eyes Frederick was an excellent Prince, but who regarded every word of Luther's as an oracle of God, assuredly did as he was bidden. Probably he read over Luther's reply first, and then rounded it into Frederick's ear with due intonation, accentuation, and interspersed jets of pungent commentary. "He is right there, your Highness: isn't he?" "He speaks the very truth of God—no man knows the Bible like Luther." "Cajetan gets it hard there, but he deserves it." "This of the supremacy of Scripture is exactly your Highness's opinion." "Our Doctor writes like a new St. Paul." Frederick was entirely won. Raised, perhaps, for the moment to a higher level of magnanimity and courage, of spiritual discernment and of intellectual comprehensiveness, than he usually occupied, he wrote a memorable letter to Cajetan, to be sent with Luther's reply. And then Spalatin forwarded *this* letter, or a copy of it, to the Wittenberg Doctor. In it the Elector tells Cajetan that, having, at his request, sent Luther to Augsburg to receive, according to Cajetan's repeated promise, a

hearing, he, Frederick, had not expected to learn that Luther was merely commanded with vehemence to recant. One essential point had been necessary in order to sanction this peremptory demand of Cajetan's, to wit, that Luther was in the wrong. Frederick sets his foot grandly down on this essential point. Before Luther can be treated as a heretic, he must be proved to be one. Frederick cannot possibly take his heresy for granted. Very many erudite and competent persons, lights of universities and others, seem to him, Frederick, to be disposed to doubt whether Luther's doctrine is indeed impious, un-Christian, heretical. Had he, Frederick, been well certified to that effect, he, "by the grace and help of God Almighty," would have required no admonition as to how to deal with the traitor. Until the heresy has been proved, however, he will not banish Luther, whose expulsion, for one thing, would inflict a loss on a Christian university. He had, therefore, sent Cajetan's letter to Luther, and now enclosed Luther's reply.

One can almost perceive the sparkle in the deep eyes of Luther grow dim with tears as he "reads and rereads" this letter of Frederick's to Cajetan. His heart smote him for having taken any liberty in the matter of publication with so just and brave a master. What delights him most of all is the trace of resentment in the Elector at the way in which his professor and himself have been treated by this Italian, or, as he words it, Frederick's "most patient, most prudent impatience." *

* De Wette, 103.

Luther, a peasant born and bred, but bred in the shadow of that castled crag of Mansfeld whose lords were not ashamed to call his father friend, had a deliberate and inexpugnable, a most manly, affectionate, and loyal reverence for princely princes and for kingly kings. No chord of sympathy responded in his breast to those who spoke evil of dignities. That Cajetan should be arrogant to the Electoral Prince of Saxony offended his sense of propriety, and lent piquancy to Frederick's dignified but effective rebuke. Martin adjures Spalatin to exert himself to make Frederick feel how intensely his, Luther's, heart glows with gratitude and joy.

CHAPTER X.

A WORD OF GREETING TO REUCHLIN.

Skilful to adjust his relations with the Elector, and mindful to keep himself visibly at the head of the German movement against Rome, Luther did not forget the world of European literature and the league that had been established between the new learning and the new theology. Except Erasmus, there was no man who more conspicuously or honourably represented the modern learning than John Reuchlin. To him, on the 14th of December, 1518, Luther addressed a characteristic letter.*

"The Lord be with thee, bravest of men!"—such are his opening words. Having alluded to the persecution Reuchlin had formerly suffered, "I was one of those," he proceeds, "who wished to be at your side, but no occasion offered. In prayer, however, and in wish, I was always intensely present with you. What was then denied to your ally has now been granted in fullest measure to your successor. The teeth of that same Behemoth press upon me if by any means they may repair the ignominy received from you. I meet them with far less genius and erudition than those with which you encountered and overthrew them, but not

* De Wette, 102.

with less trustful mind. They decline to meet me; they refuse to reply to me; by sheer force and violence they seek to make way against me. But Christ lives, and I can lose nothing, for I possess nothing. The horns of these bulls have been not a little broken by thy firmness."

Having glanced at the service done by Reuchlin to true theology by promoting the study of the Bible, previously for long centuries "not so much depressed as extinct in Germany," he ventures on a bold figure. "As God ground even into the dust of death Christ (pardon the comparison) the greatest mountain of all, but out of this dust there afterwards grew so many great mountains, so you would have attained to little fruition unless you had, by mortification, been brought down into the dust, whence now arise so many princes of sacred letters. And the prayer of the groaning Church is heard: Save, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth and the faithful fail from the children of men, and the vilest of the people have been exalted into the throne of God."

Descending, then, to more familiar matters, he explains how he has been emboldened to write, without complimentary exordium, to such a man. Not only has he made himself at home with Reuchlin by intimate acquaintance with his books, but he has been moved to write by a particular friend of Reuchlin's. "Our Philip Melanchthon, an admirable man, nay, one who has almost nothing about him which is not above humanity, and who yet is most familiar and most

friendly with me, has exacted this letter, bidding me be sure that you would not take ill, but would even be pleased with, whatever stuff I might write (*quidquid ad te ineptirem*). Place this letter to his account, if you think it wants any accounting for beyond my most sincere wish to testify my regard for you."

Book VII.

THE LEIPZIG DISPUTATION.

1519.

Book VII.

THE LEIPZIG DISPUTATION.

CHAPTER I.

A NEW ENVOY FROM ROME—A STATELY GREETING TO ERASMUS—ARCHBISHOP ALBERT AGAIN.

How often is the biographer of such a man as Luther forced to be content with instructing *himself*, and to put aside, under the inexorable requirements of our impatient age, materials that might be worked into volumes, materials that he may have actually treated in a succession of chapters. Between the meeting of Luther with Cardinal Cajetan and the Leipzig disputation there intervened many months, not one week or day of which was without significance in relation to his character and history. Let no critic imagine that these have not been made the subject of careful and protracted study by the present writer. But the result must be cut down to a meagre summary of facts, which the reader is asked to take along with him as indispensable to a comprehension—even in outline—of the life of Luther.

Cajetan having failed, the solution of the Luther problem was committed by Pope Leo to Charles von

Miltitz, a German gentleman resident in Rome. The new envoy proceeded to Germany, and, in the second half of 1518, had several interviews with Luther. The Elector Frederick hoped well of Miltitz's mission, and was earnestly desirous that it should lead to reconciliation between Wittenberg and Rome. It is beyond question that Leo could have chosen no messenger of friendlier disposition towards Germany, or more likely to deal considerately and clemently with Luther. Nor has it ever been denied that the conduct and demeanour of the envoy were, in externals, irreproachable. In externals, moreover, must be included such things as the repudiation, with sharpest rebuke and consequent ruin, of Tetzell, and the practical acknowledgment that, in the matter of Indulgences, Luther had been in the right. It is, in the second place, incontestable that Luther made as if Miltitz's proceedings were satisfactory to him. And yet—this is the third point to be remembered—he soon told his friends that he believed the embassage of Miltitz to have been treacherous from first to last, and declared himself to have played a part when he seemed to take Miltitz's advances in good faith.* "I dissimulated," he frankly says—taking credit to himself, rather than the reverse, for his knowingness in baffling guile by guile. The tears which the effusive Miltitz had shed in the transports of reconciliation he declared to have been crocodile tears—the kiss imprinted on his, Luther's, lips to have been the kiss of a Judas. In his ultimate verdict on the whole affair, delivered many years

* De Wette, 115.

subsequently, he acquitted Miltitz of personal treachery, but he never changed his belief that the mission was hollow.

To prove Luther's consistency—to vindicate his conduct at all points, as faultless both in veracity and in courage—under those circumstances, may be left to myth-making simpletons. But just and strong men, if they admit that generalship, to a certain extent, is legitimate when one has cunning, unscrupulous, and dangerous adversaries to deal with, need not fear to say that a powerful case can be made out for Luther. The grand fact by which he found himself confronted was the difference between the official documents emanating from the Vatican on his case, and the professions of the man who spoke to him in the name of the Pontiff. The documents (not seen by the public eye) were murderously severe; the speeches and gestures, which all could, more or less, observe, were ostentatiously friendly. Martin Luther did not take flowery views of human nature. To his trust in his friends there was no limit, but his suspicion was easily roused when he dealt with the outer world. "One may smile and smile," he held with Shakespeare, "and be a villain." He would have preferred any day to be burnt alive in Germany to being decoyed by sweet phrases to Rome. That Tetzell was flung aside as a damaged tool by no means conciliated him. He was haunted, now and always, with a persuasion that the high and mighty Prince-Archbishop Albert was false and immoral, capable of promoting or degrading Tetzell in accordance with the demands of his own

self-seeking policy. "*Doleo Tetzellium*, I feel for Tetzell," said Luther; and many will echo the sentiment. The poor mountebank had been true to his employers, and Luther liked the Pope and the Archbishop none the better for leaving him to die brokenhearted because he had done their business with imprudent zeal.*

The formal result of the Miltitz negotiations was an arrangement that Luther should have his matter decided on by the Bishop of Salzburg, and that he should, in the meantime, suspend his polemical activity if the attacks against him were also suspended.

Having measured himself against Cardinal Cajetan, and having heard the hum of the sympathising and acclaiming populations as he moved towards Augsburg and back, Luther was now, as has been already observed, becoming vividly conscious of spiritual leadership in Germany. The fact is attested in the somewhat proud and stately letter which, in March, 1519,† he addressed to Erasmus. As before, he extols the "honour and hope" of all sincere friends of light and literature, practically acknowledging the sage of Rotterdam as intellectual sovereign of Europe. "Who is there," he cries, "that has not admitted Erasmus to the inmost chambers of his mind? Whom does not Erasmus teach? In whom does not Erasmus reign? I refer, of course, to such as have a genuine love for letters." Though he does not expressly say so, Luther feels that he now occupies, in the world of religion, a place of eminence corresponding to that occupied by Erasmus in

* De Wette, 120. † *Ibid.*, 129.

the world of letters. *Cœpit et nomen meum non latere.* There is a grandeur of modest pride in the words. Had they been spoken by an antique Roman, they would have been often quoted. "My name, too, has begun to emerge from obscurity." It is a great moment for a man, bringing with it monitions of dread responsibility, when he is first aware of the tidal wave of humanity sounding his name, gathering round him, bearing him on, to carry him into serene havens radiant in the sunset, or to dash him upon rocks.

Erasmus replied to this letter in his own gently bright and judiciously virtuous manner, setting forth the advantages of moderation. Good is to be done rather by courteous meekness than by heat and haste. "Thus did Christ lead the world under His dominion. Thus did Paul abrogate the Jewish law, gradually transfiguring and transforming it under veils of metaphor. It is of more use to be loud against those who abuse the authority of Pontiffs that against Pontiffs themselves. The same maxim holds good in respect of Kings." Very sweet and soft; but not quite hitting the mood of our Martin. No! His incurable propensity is to smite at the high Archbishop, the polite and resplendent Pope, rather than at the poor Tetzells who abuse their authority.

Better is the Dutch Apollo's personal counsel to Luther. "The mind is to be guarded lest, under the influence of anger, or hatred, or thirst for glory, it be corrupted; for all these are wont to insinuate them-

selves into the very heart of pious impulse." Excellent advice, which no man is too wary, wise, or pure to take, and which Luther, by no means a faultless hero, would have done well to ponder. The sum of the letter is, in short, that Luther ought to be a second edition of Erasmus.

It contains one word of unreserved commendation for Martin. Erasmus has read Luther's comments on the Psalms, " vehemently approves " of them, and hopes they will be of much use. There is distinct civility also—and one thanks Erasmus for it—in the news he gives Luther as to the extent of his, Luther's, reputation. He has enthusiastic admirers in Rotterdam, and, to the certain knowledge of Erasmus, he has readers in England.

This is important. No man could tell better than Erasmus what names and causes were agitating the great world of European opinion. In truth, the name of Luther was now going out into all lands. From the cottages of Bohemia, where kneeling peasants asked God how long the blood of his servants, Huss and Jerome, was to cry to Him from the ground, to the cloisters of Oxford, where Wickliffe's name was still remembered, men were listening with eager interest to the tidings that a new preacher of righteousness had arisen, a new foe of Babylon, whose first blows had been delivered with more startling and shattering effect than those of either Huss or Wickliffe.

On the whole we may conclude that this interchange of rather cold and stiff civilities between Erasmus and

Luther did not tend to improve the cordiality of their relations. It was no easy matter to teach Luther to step softly and to modulate his accents to an inoffensive murmur. To one man alone, and not always to him, was he docile. The loved and honoured hand of Frederick had power over him. But he chafed fiercely at each new attempt of the Prince-Archbishop, Albert of Hohenzollern, to coax him into *laissez-faire*. It was one of the fixed ideas of his life that, if Albert had been a sound and strong man, *integer vitæ, scelerisque purus*, brave enough to adopt frankly that cause of reformation of which he at heart approved, instead of posing and paltering between the antagonist parties, and aiming always at hushing matters up, an incalculable amount of woe, strife, and heart-burning might have been avoided.

When the Theses appeared, Albert had made his first attempt to hobble Luther. When Cajetan failed and Miltitz proved inefficient, he judged it in season to make another experiment. In a letter to Spalatin, written early in 1519, Luther mentions that he had again been favoured with an interview by the Bishop of Brandenburgh. Waiting on him personally in the seclusion of his convent, the Bishop had expostulated on his alarming proceedings. On the details of the Bishop's remonstrance he seems not to think it worth while to enter; but the substance of what he had said clearly was that Luther might not be far wrong, nay, that he might be right, but that his manner lacked gentleness. "My notion is," says

Luther, in his usual open way, "that the Bishops are now at last becoming alive to the circumstance that the duty I did formerly, and am doing now, is really and truly their duty. They are just a little ashamed of themselves. They call me proud and headstrong. I say not that either charge is unjust. But they are not the men to teach us either what kind of God we serve, or what manner of men we are." *

* De Wette, 120.

CHAPTER II.

THE BAREFOOTERS OF JUTERBOG.

Having formed some idea of his lofty and unyielding demeanour towards Princes of the Church and Princes of Letters, we cannot be surprised to find Luther incensed when rebuked for his peccant theology by a set of persons who could plead no official connection with him, and whose position certainly did not warrant them to reprimand the famous Doctor of Wittenberg.

The intense and searching ferment which he had initiated was now agitating all minds in Germany, especially those minds which were of any ecclesiastical colour or calling. Wherever monks stretched out their simple necks in colloquy, the views of Luther came up for discussion. In April of this same year, 1519, the Franciscan Monks of the Stricter Rule, those who were called Barefooters, held a gathering of the Saxon province at their Convent in Juterbog, which place readers may recollect as the nearest point to Wittenberg to which Tetzell was allowed to approach. The Juterbog Franciscans had probably, in many instances, heard Luther preach, and his printed sermons and other published writings were doubtless familiar to them. Whether they acted on their own impulse, or whether, as seems more likely, they were under the influence of

more erudite theologians than themselves, Doctor Eck, for example, certain it is that they unanimously resolved to censure and repudiate the new Wittenberg doctrines. They embodied in fourteen propositions what they held to be the errors and innovations of the mutinous professor. That the will of man is in bondage to sin; that more of credence and authority is due to a rustic, backed by the Word of God, than to Popes or Councils that cannot base their opinion on Scripture; that God demands from men impossibilities; that the Bohemians are better Christians than we; that Thomas of Aquinas had not deemed it inconsistent with orthodoxy and loyalty to the Church to rebuke the Pope and the Bishops; that the authority of the Pope rests not on Divine right but human; that Peter had no princely dominion over the other Apostles: these and a few other propositions of a similar kind were condensed or distilled by the Juterbog Franciscans out of the words and works of Luther, and set forth as the quintessence of theological poison.*

Martin, in dealing with these gentlemen, adopts no penitential or deferential attitude, enters upon no laborious explanation or apology. The tone of his reply is that which might befit a learned schoolmaster snubbing a parcel of froward and conceited boys who essayed to admonish and instruct him. He chides them in fiercely sarcastic terms, forbidden as they are by their own rules to cultivate learning or go into difficult speculations, for coming forward with their exalted views on questions that have put to a strain the

* Loescher.

mightiest scholars and the acutest reasoners. Who are they to babble about Thomas and Bonaventura as pillars of the Church, invoking their authority against Luther? "Who," he asks, "preserved the Church before either Thomas or the monastic orders were *in rerum naturâ?*"

But when he gets past the first part of his answer he takes a less irate and pedagogic tone. He does not really mean, he says, to be severe. If indeed they want war—and they deserve it—war they shall have to their hearts' content; but if they are amenable to logic and civility he will argue with them. He will vouchsafe to cast for them a few beams of elucidative common sense upon this theology which they deem so portentous.

They say, then, that he has alleged that God assigns to man an impossible task. It is true. And what else, he asks, is the doctrine of St. Paul? If it were possible for man to create or procure for himself the righteousness of God, would Christ have died? "Go," he cries, "to St. Augustine, and read what he says of the immaculate nature of righteousness. You will find that it is you who are the schismatics, that it is you who teach blasting error, when you deny that God prescribes impossibilities to man. Wherein, if we can do all things by ourselves, lies the necessity for grace? Will you quibble and smile away the bounteousness of God's love? And why should you pray, *Thy* will be done, if *you* can execute the will of God? This crass audacity of yours makes me ashamed. The

most Christian of Christian doctrines you call pestiferous and pernicious error."

Having shown that the answer to others among the points of the indictment is given by implication in the right doctrine of grace and righteousness, he comes to the question of Scripture and its interpretation. The Franciscans had been thrown into a state of horror and amazement by the idea that a mere layman, speaking as the Bible spoke, was armed with an authority paramount to that of Council, Church, or Pope. On this head, as on that relating to the omnipotence of grace and the impotence of human will, he insists that he is the Catholic and that his reprovers are the schismatics. Not only St. Augustine, but all the fathers, he claims on his side. Nay, he affirms that not even a heretic had denied the supremacy of Scripture, until these new heretics of Juterbog announced that all opinion on the subject, except theirs, was plague-struck, absurd, and opposed to the Catholic verity. "Is not this blasphemy against the Holy Ghost?"

The Barefooters had been scandalised at the notion that the Pope did not rule by Divine right; that St. Peter himself had possessed no peculiar, sole, and princely power. Luther tells them that St. Jerome had demonstrated the equality of all the Apostles, the equality of all Bishops, in respect of Divine right, and the identity of Bishop and Presbyter. "Where are you now," he asks, "ye heresy-hunting simpletons? Will you burn St. Jerome? Is he also guilty of rending your seamless coat?" Read him and you will learn how recklessly negligent you have been. "The Pope is the Vicar of

Christ by human right alone. Even at Rome, in the mother-church of Christendom, the Lateran, it is so written."

So much for his rejoinder to the critical and incriminating Franciscan luminaries of Juterbog. Our brief English description does no justice to the clang and pungency of the rebuke, as it rolls from Luther's lips in that iron tongue in which Cæsar addressed his legions. The original is a notable illustration of his fiery nature, impatient emphasis, and large capacities of wrath.

Intermeddling, incompetent, busy, and irritating to a degree, as they unquestionably were, those monks ought, nevertheless, to have been more gently handled by Luther. It was of quite incalculable importance, for one thing, that he should sympathetically enter into their position, and intelligently apprehend not only their reasons but their feelings. Their logic might be weak, their learning shallow, but their *sentiment* was beyond measure important. It represented the sentiment of tens of millions. There is hardly an argument that has been brought against the distinctive Protestant theology, from that day till now, which may not be found, in germ or by implication, in the propositions formulated by those simple Barefooters. The brightest intellects of the nineteenth century have found difficulty in the question how the Divine omnipotence and omniscience can be reconciled with the possibility of human freedom, how creative grace can have all the scope claimed for it in conversion by Luther without petrifying the will and impugning the true personality of man.

If Luther suspected the presence of Dr. Eck, of Ingoldstadt, among the auxiliaries of the Barefooters on this occasion, he would not be thereby predisposed to gentleness. But Doctor Eck, though it suits him sometimes to move in a cloak of darkness, is no craven, and Luther may have an opportunity of measuring force with him in open battle. We shall see.

CHAPTER III.

A CONFLICT DRAWING NEAR—FREDERICK THE WISE AND THE BIBLE.

While Frederick was comforting himself with the thought that an accommodation had been effected between Luther and the Pope, Luther was rapidly advancing in the direction of hostility to Rome. While he was believed to be taking off his armour, he was putting it on. The year 1519 had not come in when, in writing to Link,* he assigns as his reason for enclosing certain documents, "that you may see whether I rightly divine that the true Antichrist, described by Paul, reigns in the Roman *Curia*." He adds that he "thinks" he "can demonstrate that it is worse than the Turks." Let us not, however, fancy that when he speaks of the Roman *Curia*, he means the Church of Rome. He still reverences that Church. He has no objection to admit a Primacy of the Pope under sundry qualifications.

A prominent part of the agreement with Miltitz was that there should be a suspension of controversy on both sides. There is a look of wild impracticability in this stipulation which suggests that it must have commended itself to Frederick and Miltitz rather than to Luther. At all events there is small evidence in Luther's letters

* De Wette, 100.

of a wish to observe it. The name of Eck occurs in these not infrequently, and with ominous context. At one time, as readers know, Luther had referred in terms of fervent commendation to the Ingoldstadt Doctor. But now, "like cliffs that had been rent asunder," the two men stand sharply aloof from each other, champions of the opposing causes, Papacy and Reformation. In writing ostensibly against Carlstadt, Eck had spent little force upon the less renowned opponent, but aimed his deadliest thrusts at Carlstadt's friend and backer, Luther. "*Him*," says Martin, "with whom is his debate, he lets alone; *my* opinions he snatches at and mangles most atrociously." In the beginning of February, 1519, Eck, he complains, is again girding at him; and the result is to stir the militant impulses within him, so that he burns to do something more decisive against "the Roman snakes" than he has yet done. A grand argumentative combat between Eck and Carlstadt has been arranged to come off in the course of the summer, and Luther determines to take part in it on the side of Carlstadt. Writing to Staupitz, on the 20th of February,* he seems to anticipate the remonstrances or affectionate admonitions of his correspondent against precipitation, and exclaims: "God carries and drives me on rather than leads. I am not master of myself. I wish to be quiet, and I am caught away into the midst of tumults." "I wish to be quiet," such might be his feeling at the moment, but in his heart of hearts he longed for the joy of decisive battle.

* De Wette, 122.

"I am turning over," he writes to Spalatin, "the decretals of the Pontiffs, with a view to my disputation (with Eck), and—I speak it in your ear—I know not whether the Pope is Antichrist himself or his apostle."*

Meanwhile our worthy Frederick is getting apprehensive as to the authentic and adequate performance of that promise to be silent which Luther had made. Is this alarming Doctor getting himself and his master into trouble again? Luther, ordered or entreated by Spalatin, in Frederick's name, to keep quiet, sees fit on the 13th of March—the very day when he favours Spalatin with that enlivening whisper about Antichrist—to address a few words of petition, not without an undercurrent of advice and remonstrance, to the excellent Prince.

Fully acknowledging his promise of silence, he reminds Frederick that there are two sides to the treaty concluded under the diplomatic auspices of the honourable Charles von Miltitz. His opponents are to keep the peace as well as he. But Dr. Eck has been attacking him, and trying in the craftiest manner to get the wind of him. If people understand that he is disarmed, while others have the use of their weapons, who will not draw sword upon him? And this is not all—not by any means. His conscience will not permit him to look on as a neutral spectator while the truth is being assailed. In short—though he does not say this in so many words—he must at all risks meet Eck in disputation.†

* De Wette, 127. † *Ibid.*, 126.

But we have a fuller and a far richer communication of his to Frederick than this, in the last week of March —the dedication, to wit, of the first part of his new commentary on the Psalms. No book in the Bible was dearer to Luther than the Psalms. If his impassioned, irregular, but puissant and penetrating logic gave him an organic affinity to St. Paul, the poetic fountain in his nature was essentially of the same kind as that of David and the other poets of Israel. In presenting the book to Frederick he writes a dedication which is, in fact, a letter of the noblest friendship, in which the relation of the two men to each other is illustrated in a highly interesting manner.

Luther begins with a few complimentary flourishes, not inferior, certainly not much superior, to the average of those that are customary in letters of dedication. But his tone speedily becomes earnest, and it is from his very heart he speaks when, turning from his patron Prince, he refers to that other SOVEREIGN whose truth he is trying to set forth to men. The responsibility, he says, is too great to have been voluntarily assumed. In obedience to God he undertook it; he feels the weight of it to be too much for flesh and blood; and only on compulsion does he remain under it.

In laying before Frederick these—what should he call them? Interpretations or Commentaries would, he felt, be too pretentious terms—"workings, *operationes*" of his upon the Psalms, he believes the Prince capable of testing their worth, although unfurnished with the apparatus of learning. And as for the fact that

Frederick loved and trusted the Scriptures, he has on that head a little incident or anecdote to relate.

That "best of men, John Staupitz"—to be reverenced by him, Luther, as in very deed his father in Christ*—had told him that once, at the Electoral Court, the conversation—Frederick then sitting in the inner circle of his friends—had turned upon preaching. What this interlocutor in the colloquy or that had remarked on the subject Staupitz did not say; but he *did* say that, at a certain point, the Prince struck in. "Those discourses," said Frederick, "which go upon the traditions and subtleties of men are marvellously cold, and lay a pithless grasp upon the heart. The reason is that the acutest disputant will spin no thread of subtlety so thin that another disputant will not be found to spin it a shade thinner still. Scripture, on the other hand, has a majesty so great and an energy so intense that, burning up all the fine frivolous network of our disputation, it extorts the confession, Never did man so speak; here is the finger of God; for it does not teach as the scribes and Pharisees, but as one having power." So far the Prince. Staupitz heard the words with ravishment. When Frederick had made an end, he, Staupitz, expressed his assent to the Prince's view with warm enthusiasm. Then Frederick stretched out his hand, and Staupitz took it. "Promise me," said Frederick, "that you will always be of this mind."

A memorable scene, though so quiet and homely!

* *Optimus et vere mihi in Christo reverendus pater meus.*—De Wette, 128.

Art might find a subject in it, if there were a painter in Germany who continued to care much about Frederick the Wise and his old-world princeliness. Whatever the artist may think of it, the historian must admit its significance. It proclaims that, at some date prior to the spring of 1519, the Elector of Saxony already entertained a supreme regard for Scripture. If Frederick had not been convinced, beyond reach of sophistication, that he could not do wrong in letting the Bible be seen by its own light, and in refusing to call a man a heretic merely because he found its sense to be different from the scholastic version, the main current of modern history might have flowed in a different channel. In that event Luther would, likely enough, have died by fire. He being burned—and burned, not as Huss was, by a Council, but, as would certainly have been the case, by Rome—the Reformation would nevertheless have come. Northern Europe was exasperated beyond reconciliation against the spiritual yoke of Rome. But the change would then have taken place in the form of perhaps the most terrific revolution the world has ever seen.

Luther is charmed with Staupitz's anecdote. "This most delightful story," he says, "transports me with love for my thrice-illustrious Prince." He cannot help loving those who love the Word of God. On the other hand, he is fain to confess that, when he has to do with men who pervert and despise it, he cannot but hate them with a perfect hatred.

Words more sincere than these never came out of a

glowing heart. Let them be remembered when terms of fierce indignation, of impetuous and unmeasured scorn, escape Luther in the rush and tumult of controversy. If he is borne beyond the limits of temperance in speech, let us own that it is the surge of no ignoble passion that carries him on.

The letter concludes with observations which were fresh at the time, but may seem to us hackneyed enough, on the opulent sweetness, graciousness, and simplicity of the Psalms. Augustine, Jerome, Athanasius, Hilarius, Cassiodorus, had, he says, drawn from these wells of living truth, and yet they were not dry. No book in the Bible had been more diligently studied by him, but he was quite sure he had not exhausted it. The Divine Interpreter had many disciples, and reserved the power and right of giving to each some new glimpse of Scriptural insight.

CHAPTER IV.

OBSTRUCTIONS—SPIRITUAL TROUBLE—THE START FROM WITTENBERG.

It was in the nature of things inevitable that there should be a powerful reactionary effort against the onward impulse communicated by Luther. The ocean tides, as every careful observer knows, advance first with a grand impetuous rush along the shore, tossing the dusty seaweed and the sand masonry of children before them. Then the refluent force becomes apparent; the wave pauses, gathers itself up into a surge, and rolls back to meet the advancing wave. The two spring high into the air in the clash of their encounter. Mr. Ruskin, who has given the best description of the phenomenon, tells us that the sound of their collision is, in cases of storm, like the report of a great gun. The promulgation of the Theses dates for us the first impetuous rush of the great secular tide of the Lutheran Reformation, Tetzell's wares and Silvester's lucubrations being the seaweed and sand castles hurled aside in its course. Cajetan and Miltitz will represent some formal but ineffectual marshalling of the powers of reaction. But the first really bold and energetic gathering of the refluent surge, the first formidable arraying of the old forces against

the new, the first far-sounding shock between reform and reaction, was the Leipzig disputation.

Martin was now to have experiences of a different kind from those to which he had hitherto been, in the main, habituated. Doubtless his life had, for years, been "a battle and a march;" he had confronted lions of Moab and known the backbiting and yelping of jackals. He had made acquaintance with peril, disquietude, difficulty. But on the whole the joy of battle had predominated. In his duel with Cajetan he had commanded the sympathy of bystanders, had won a laugh even from the Italians, and had been escorted home by the acclaiming Germans. He was now to taste the bitter as well as the sweet. He was to have the sobering sense of being held by spectators to be getting the worst of it in the cut and parry of controversial fray. He was to lose his temper as completely as Cajetan's had been lost at Augsburg.

The tear and wear, the infinite worry and tribulation, occasioned to him by the Leipzig tournament began long before the champions met. Chapter after chapter might be filled with an account of the complex and irritating negotiations, the planning and manœuvring, the letter-writing, haggling, arranging, which he had to transact before he could so much as get himself admitted to a place in the combat. The tenacity of purpose, the diplomatic skill, the unconquerable patience, with which he persisted, were all required to overcome the forces of obstruction. Eager as were the reactionists to check the advancing movement, they

were also, for the most part, anxious to avoid collision with *him*.

For complete approval and sympathy in his desire to encounter Eck, he could look in almost no quarter. Except the Wittenberg students, and his own inner circle of ardent adherents, no one seemed to wish him to engage in the disputation. Frederick devoutly hoped that he would sit still. Spalatin was alarmed at his pace. Miltitz, distressed to perceive that the volcanic fires had not been raked out by his delicate operations, stepped forward to remind him of that exquisite covenant which they two had concluded, and to ask him, instead of thinking of new contention, to betake himself to Coblenz, on the Rhine, there to receive final sentence from the appointed judge, in presence of Cajetan. It was about the beginning of May that Miltitz signified to Luther his views upon the subject. The matter crops up in a letter from Martin to Spalatin of May 16th.* This absurd creature, who has been wanting him to start for Coblenz, has not, says Luther, even got the mandate of the Pope, or the word of the Archbishop, or the trial. "Have the people lost their senses?"

But a more formidable personage than Miltitz had to be dealt with.† Duke George, the Elector's cousin, head of the junior or Albertine branch of the Saxon family, as Frederick was of the Ernestine branch, who held court in Dresden, and considered the University of Leipzig to be under his special patronage, looked upon

* De Wette, 138. † De Wette, 140.

the Wittenberg Doctor with a very mixed feeling. Suspicion and perplexity qualified much more decidedly in George's case than in that of Frederick the hopeful and gratified regard with which the genius, courage, and high aspirations of Luther tended to inspire all patriotic Saxons. Readers know that, some three years before this summer of 1519, George and Luther had crossed each other's path, and that George then found the preaching of salvation by grace a questionable innovation. In the opinion of George, Eck was clearly the safer and sounder man of the two. But George was not without trace of spiritual aspiration and the right regal ambition of ruling well. Like his cousin Frederick, he was of pious nature, earnestly interested in things that raise men above the clay, a believer in light, though too scantily gifted with the penetrating and intrepid power that distinguishes light from darkness. He would not admit that the torch of truth is the same thing as the link of the incendiary. Like Frederick, he would not gag a prophet of God. But he was far more apprehensive than Frederick that Luther might be a prophet of Baal. To George Luther had to write again, again, and yet again, and even to appeal to Eck for backing, before he could extort consent to his taking part in the debate.

In fact, it would probably have been impossible for Luther to meet Eck in public disputation, if he had insisted on appearing as one of the principals in the affair. It was, to use his own expression, under the wing of Carlstadt that he contrived to enter the lists.

In the circle of kindred spirits grouped around Luther, none was more fanatically aggressive, more dogmatically vehement, than Andrew Bodenstein, known to history as Carlstadt. He had rushed into controversy with Eck soon after the publication of the Theses; but Eck, not esteeming Carlstadt a foeman worthy of his steel, had treated him, in published writings, with the clemency of disdain, and aimed his barbed shafts at Luther. From that time it became one of the intensest wishes of Luther's heart to meet Eck in pitched battle, and Eck was perfectly willing to face his opponent. But it was a necessity that Eck and Carlstadt should ostensibly be the champions. No Papist was afraid of Carlstadt, and all requisite permissions and safe-conducts were without difficulty accorded him. Of these Carlstadt had no objections that Luther should make use; but being possessed with a sense of his own importance, he was not the man to play the part of second fiddle with satisfaction.

Amid the fuss and futility of these manœuvrings, Luther had been engaged in a searching inquiry into the origin and grounds of the power wielded by the Pope. While studying he had been writing, and, since his pen went fast, he soon drew up a treatise on the subject. It took the form of a dissertation in support of the position that the Church of Rome has no Divine right to superiority over other Churches. The preparation of this treatise was for him the burnishing and buckling on of the armour in which he went to encounter Eck.

Another matter, and one of still greater importance, here claims our attention. On the eve of setting out for Leipzig, confident in his cause and full of exultant hope, Luther found himself suddenly arrested by the still small voice of God. What he described as a trial greater than any of his external ones—an experience of spiritual struggle and agony, blackness of desolation, as if his soul were forsaken of God—had come upon him. He entreats Lange of Erfurth, to whom he writes on the subject on the 6th of June, to pray for him, "a great sinner." * What the occasion or special circumstances of this event in Luther's spiritual history may have been is unknown. He sends Lange only a few flying lines on the subject, saying that he will tell him more when they meet. It had reference to nothing external. "I want absolutely nothing," he says, "but the Divine mercy." A cloud had risen between his soul and the Divine Father. The descending of the light upon his spirit was stayed. If we do not understand that experiences of this nature were connected with the deepest springs of his power, we have seen but a very little way into the character of Luther.

But the Leipzig disputation is to go forward, and Luther is to take part in it. Against impetuosity like his, combined with such generalship, all opposition proved vain. The University of Wittenberg was vehemently excited by the approaching event, and two hundred of the students, brimful of ingenuous enthusiasm for Carlstadt, for Melanchthon, above all for

* De Wette, 145.

Luther, getting out their pikes and halberts, constituted themselves a guard of honour, possibly even of defence, to escort their professors to Leipzig. In the Leipzig University mediævalism and scholasticism still rule the minds of men, and we bold Wittenberg reformers must be prepared for any emergency. To the great joy of Luther, Melanchthon accompanied him to the war.

And so, on the 24th of June, 1519, the Wittenberg squadron entered Leipzig. Carlstadt, not the man to play second fiddle more conspicuously than he could help, headed the procession, arrayed in grey coat and felt hat, riding sublime in a vehicle by himself. At due distance in the rear came Luther and Melanchthon, in the same carriage, with whom sat also Duke Barnim of Pomerania, Rector of Wittenberg University. The students marched before and beside the carriages, and the Leipzig crowd looked on. Suddenly, just as Carlstadt, riding sublime, had passed the Grimma Gate, his axletree gave way, and he was tumbled out ignominiously into the street. To laugh at those who from high place fall into the mud is a touch of nature that makes all men kin; and it would not tend to console Carlstadt amid the tittering crowd to hear the omen interpreted, as it was by on-lookers, into a presage of the position, relatively to Luther, which he was to occupy in the ensuing disputation.

CHAPTER V.

PRELIMINARY CHAFFERINGS—LUTHER'S MODERNISM.

So march the Wittenbergers through a tolerant, but not sympathetic, crowd of Leipzigers. The sentiment and sympathy of town and gown in Leipzig are with Eck. What is this Wittenberg University, that it dares to exalt its horn against Leipzig? A mere mushroom! A seat of learning not twenty years old! Our Leipzig University has on its brow the wisdom and the fame of a hundred years! And who is this upstart, Doctor Luther, with his new-fangled notions, pretending to be cleverer than all philosophers and holier than all priests? But Doctor Eck will tackle him!

The partisanship which, both on the Wittenberg side and the side of Leipzig, made itself manifest on this occasion was, on the whole, praiseworthy. Leipzigers and Wittenbergers alike did homage to the fact that man's supreme interest is truth. What method for its discovery could be suggested more in accordance with reason than that of open, unreserved, unflinching scrutiny by competent men? The plan of public disputation, so much in vogue in the Universities of the middle ages, was indeed an

adaptation of the method of the Socratic and Platonic dialogue. Doubtless it may be urged against all such dialectical displays, that the combatants are under temptation to have recourse to *ad captandum* arguments; but it is equally true that these are liable to reciprocal exposure. That a dexterous, unscrupulous, eloquent, and superficial disputant might be pronounced victorious, when his slower and less adroit, but really stronger, opponent ought to have taken the honours, is undeniable; but this objection will apply to every possible form of inquiry and decision based on an appeal to an audience after reasons heard for and against. Every one thinks or says to himself, "Let me hear two men, thoroughly qualified to place before me what is to be said for and against a proposition, and I will undertake to decide which has the better case." The administration of criminal law in England, resting as it does on jury trial, recognises this persuasion as reasonable. It was fundamentally this persuasion, and a noble form of it, which empowered the burghers of Leipzig and the students of Wittenberg, Duke George of Saxony and Duke Barnim of Pomerania, and a huge mixed multitude of mortals, lay and clerical, gathered in Leipzig at Midsummer, 1519, to expect, from the collision and clash of champion experts, vivid and trustworthy light upon the questions agitating Christendom.

Luther shared this hope in its finest and most elevated form. In mature yet fresh manhood, he had not yet learned by sad experience how hard men are to convince, how difficult to teach. Rather he had been

environed by circumstances tending to nurse the fond illusion that there resides in truth, by force of its celestial virtue, an irresistible witchery. The youth of Germany, the people of Germany, many learned men, and at least one sovereign Prince, had responded to his appeals. He who a few years before had been the unknown and unnoticed monk Martin could now tell an envoy of the Pope that a Cardinal Legate was not fit even to be present while his theology was being investigated.* Believing himself to stand, with the whole company of simple, God-fearing people on his side, against error and tyranny, he cherished the transporting hope of proving himself a good soldier both of light and of freedom. In a confidential letter to Spalatin, he betrayed a confident expectation of triumph over his "cunning" and "shifty" antagonist.

Eck, for his part, rich in animal vivacity, inexhaustible in physical force, with libraries stowed away in his memory, and master of every art of controversial tongue-fence, was arrogantly ready to confront Luther. But the shrewdest Romanists, convinced that their best policy was silence, shook their heads in disapproval of the discussion. The Bishop of Merseburg, more imperiously resolved to put a stop to the disputation, announced by public placard that it was forbidden. In this the bold Bishop overshot the mark. Duke George was not going to be taught his duty in that fashion. He told the Bishop to be still, and threw the bill-sticker into prison.

* Letter to Miltitz.

The obstructive worry which had preceded Luther's departure from Wittenberg did not cease immediately on his arrival in Leipzig. Inevitable negotiations remained as to who should act as judges, at the end of the debate, to pronounce who was the victor, and as to the manner in which the contentions of the respective disputants should be placed before these arbiters. Eck and his friends proposed that one or more of the principal Universities—German, Italian, French, or English—should be asked to play the part of umpire. They held, also, that each controversialist ought to draw up, to his own satisfaction, a report of what he had said in the discussion, which report should constitute his case, and be submitted to the judges. Luther took a different view on both points. He would name no University—no particular judge or umpire of any kind—but leave the public opinion of Europe to arrive at its own conclusions. As for the case to be presented to this tribunal, he thought that it ought to consist of what the disputants actually said, to be taken down by competent reporters and printed for general distribution.

What strikes one most in these suggestions of Luther's is their bold modernism. He proposed exactly such a course as would be adopted if the argumentative battle took place to-day. The newspapers would report the respective contentions of Doctor Eck and Doctor Luther, and all men would consider themselves capable of deciding, over the breakfast-table, which argument stood most firmly propped. Our Martin, indeed, through his fund of common sense, and

practical, straightforward, anti-red-tapeish ways of doing things, will not unfrequently be found standing side by side with us of the nineteenth century. He knew that if the disputants were, first of all, to draw up elaborate statements of their arguments, and if these were transmitted to a conclave of University bigwigs, the adjudication would not take place for years, and then no one would mind it. This was the regular old method, but when friend Frobenius of Basle set up his printing-press, this and many other old methods were getting superseded. Luther, better than any man then living, knew the time of day in the sixteenth century.

But such ideas were wild and crude in the opinion of Eck and the reactionaries. In vain did Luther, firmly fixed in his opinion, show fight. Duke George and Doctor Eck were too strong for him. Rather than give them a pretext for saying that he wanted to evade the combat, he gave way. It was decided that some famed university or universities should be asked to discharge the office of judge. Shall it be Erfurth? Shall it be Paris? Luther did not care. But he spoke up when the question arose how the judging court or committee at the selected university should be chosen. Somewhat painfully significant is Luther's peremptory insistence that no monk shall be among the judges. So far had estrangement already proceeded between him and his old associates. Eck urged that the *Medici* and the *Philosophi*—the Medical Faculty and the Philosophical Faculty—ought not to be included among the judges. To Eck, with a whole theological library in his head, it

seemed monstrous that mere doctors and philosophers should adjudicate on a theological dispute. But Luther stood out stoutly for the physicians and the truth-seekers. Is theology, then, a thing for theologians only? If we have got God's truth on our side, are we afraid of those medical men who search into nature, or of those philosophers who investigate the ultimate problems of thought?

We need not follow these preliminary chafferings farther. They came in the end to nothing. The grandiose way of Eck and Duke George was decided on, but the result was as Luther anticipated. No University ever adjudicated on the disputation.* The whole matter might have been passed over but for the light it casts upon the general position of Luther as a moderniser, as one who helped to make room for the enormous forces that came into the system of European civilisation with the dawn of the sixteenth century.

* This, of course, does not imply that no University proclaimed for or against the general views of Luther.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GATHERING IN LEIPZIG—SKETCHES OF ECK AND LUTHER.

On the morning of the 27th of June, 1519, the town of Leipzig swarmed with visitors and buzzed with excitement. Theologians, professors, lecturers, tutors—every sort of person attached in any way to the Universities of Germany—had come flocking to the grand intellectual tournament that was this day to be inaugurated. Hosts of monks poured into the town, eager to uphold the honour of the Church, instinctively conscious that the cause of Rome was their own. Strangers had arrived from Bohemia, children of the men who had followed Zisca's drum, eager to know if indeed the dayspring from on high had visited Germany, and a new and mightier Huss was here. Duke George and his courtiers were present. The guilds were getting out their banners and other decorative gear, for the brethren of the various crafts were to march in procession.

It was, indeed, to be a memorable day in the history, not of Leipzig only, but of the world; the most memorable, perhaps, since the city of the linden trees began to rise in its watered plain. In the heart of the German countries, in a wide valley watered by the

Pleisse, the Partha, and the Elster, Leipzig had for centuries been one of the great gathering places of European commerce. To the fairs of Easter and Michaelmas, and the less important fair of the New Year, trooped the representatives of every kind of industry. The unrivalled toy-makers of Nuremberg, the famed jewellers of Würtemberg, here challenged all Germans and all men to competition. From Italy came merchants bearing silk, and the Swiss descended from their mountains with wool. Russia sent leathers, furs, and skins. France shone in delicate splendour of lace, and gave the law in mode. England soon began to claim attention for her iron wares. The Polish Jews were busy in their own lines of trade; Greeks and Bulgarians were not absent; even from far Armenia there came interested and interesting strangers. Such was Leipzig, a gathering place of nations, when Eck of Ingoldstadt and Luther of Wittenberg stood face to face within its walls in 1519.

The magistrates, merchants, burghers of the town, though honourably alive to the importance of the event, could not estimate its bearing, as we now can, on the history of their city. They could not know that one main effect of the activity of this Wittenberg monk was to be an enormous expansion of spiritual and secular activity and of commercial intercourse. Protestantism and industrialism have been, in great measure, convertible terms. Nor is it much too broad an assertion that modern literature has been Protestant. A little nest of printers had already begun work in Leipzig when Doctor

Eck and Doctor Luther appeared, but the most ardently speculative printer then in Leipzig never imagined in day-dream, or saw in night vision, such promise of activity and wealth for printers and publishers as was realised in those centuries when all the foremost book-providers in Europe had their establishments in the town, and when every man in Germany with any tincture of literary interest looked for tidings of the annual book-fair of Leipzig. Martin Luther stands in a relation of historical paternity to a long series of spiritual births, some of them portentous enough, that made the sensation of the year at Leipzig Book Fair. Of how many speculative systems and schools of poetry—philosophies of Wolff, of Leibnitz, of Kant, of Hegel, of Schopenhauer, poetries of Lessing, of Schiller, of Goethe, of Heine—can it be said that they would never have been, or that they would have been different from what they were, if monk Martin had not done his work! Nor was the spiritual strife between Eck and Luther without its political bearings and consequences. Plains inviting the display of market wares favour also the deploying of squadrons. Leipzig has been the scene of great battles. The grandchildren of the honest burghers who marched in procession with Luther and Eck heard the guns of Gustavus Adolphus thunder against Tilly, and when a few more generations had gone by *their* children saw the resurgent peoples of Germany break the military power of Napoleon.

Such was and is Leipzig. A city of books and of battles,

in the shadow of whose linden trees tired Slavic warriors rested in centuries long gone by, and whose larks and gardens and book-stores have not yet lost their fame.

The proceedings of the day began in the court of the University, where Simon Pistoris, professor of jurisprudence, delivered a speech. The assembly then adjourned to the Church of St. Thomas, where mass, on a scale of grandeur unprecedented in Leipzig at the time, was sung by twelve voices. From this church started the general procession, to which the trades in their various costumes, with banners and weapons, and sound of martial music, lent animation and embellishment. Headed by Duke George and the Duke of Pomerania, the *cortège* moved towards the old Castle of Pleissenburg, the feudal citadel and ducal residence. Duke George had ordered the great hall of the castle to be hung with appropriate tapestries, and otherwise prepared for the occasion. At one end, right and left, were placed pulpits or desks of suitable elevation, in which the rival champions took up their positions. Over the head of each, in appropriate blazonry, were the patron saints who might be supposed to take a special interest in the strife. Over Eck glanced the resplendent form of St. George the dragon-queller, capable, thought the Leipzigers, of assisting the loyal Eck to transfix the aspiring reptile of Wittenberg. St. Martin, a much less martial saint, but charitable and of pure intent, was suspended in effigy over the *cathedra* of Luther—a man not accustomed to give the saints much trouble of any kind, if only they would stand out of his light!

A tournament of orators must, of course, be introduced by speechification. One might have hoped that Simon Pistoris would say all that was wanted before the champions began. But this was not so. Peter Schade Mosellanus came also prepared with a discourse. This a child—emblem of innocence and simplicity—was to have spoken. Peter's speech, however, turned out to be two hours long. This would not suit infantine powers of delivery. He uttered it accordingly himself; but not with eminent success, his voice being weak from recent illness. It is not without some slight surprise that we find him thus employed, for we know from his correspondence with Erasmus that he looked upon the whole business with the knowing and ironical air of a smart young Humanist. He wrote to Erasmus on the approaching ceremony. "There will be absurdity enough," says the pungent Peter, "for ten Democrituses to laugh themselves tired." What he said in his two hours' speech no sane mortal is likely to inquire; but he has left descriptions of Eck and Luther for which, though allowance is to be made for his smirking flippancy, intelligent readers will be grateful. Eck, he says, is the Alpha and Omega of wind-bags and rhodomontadists. *Luft-bestreiter und gross-faucher.* Of spiritual earnestness, of aspiration after ideal and celestial excellence, the Ingoldstadt Doctor has, to his thinking, no more conception than the Socrates of Aristophanes, seated on the altitudes of the cheese-cupboard, and squinting down observations on the immortal gods, had of sublime philosophy. Obviously

Peter is at his smartest in this description, but it accords well with what is established from other sources, and tends to prove that Eck, if not morally below, was also not above, the average ecclesiastic of his time. For him a disputation with Luther on the Pope's authority was what previous dialectical combats had been, an occasion for showing his skill and prowess, for dazzling men's eyes with the treasures of his learning, and surprising them with his acuteness. He was a loyal subject and champion of the Pope; but he was no more. The defence of the old had not become for him, as it became for men on the same side before half the century had elapsed, a sacred and solemn enthusiasm. Carlstadt and Luther professed the purest thirst for truth, truth only, and bitterly complained that Eck sought for glory instead of truth. The idea floating before Luther's imagination, as something infinitely to be desired, was that Eck, Melanchthon, Carlstadt, and himself should assist each other in the search for truth. The reciprocal help might be rendered by sharp methods, by exposure of mistakes, by analysis of errors, but always, he hoped, in a friendly spirit, always in a common cause, always with the vivid feeling that it was of quite trivial consequence who was vanquished, who victorious, in the competitive display of eloquence and logic, but of unspeakable moment that they should all do their best to ascertain the truth. A beautiful imagination! Too good to be realised.

The contrast between Luther and Eck was com-

prehensive and sharp—a contrast of body, a contrast of soul. Eck, a mountain of a man, with large features, prominent eyes, and expression of rude courage and self-confidence; Luther, worn with toil and excitement, his eye clear and keen, his countenance aglow with the fire of genius and of spiritual passion. Not above the middle height, if, indeed, he did not fall below it, Martin was at this period slender though wiry. Cajetan would hardly have persisted in calling him "brotherkin, *fraterculus*," unless his appearance had given some suggestion of a tiny man. Since he had looked into Cajetan with those piercing glances which the Cardinal wished he might never see again, his life had been one of consuming work and perpetual worry, until now you could count the bones under his skin, and but for the burning of the eye his face might have failed to convey an idea of his power. He did not, however, look exhausted; and an intrepidity far more settled and serene than the animal audacity of Eck sat upon his brow.

Peter Mosellanus did at last reach the end of his two hours' oration. Then the grand old hymn, "Come, Holy Spirit, *Veni sancte spiritus*," was three times sung by trained musicians, the whole assembly kneeling. The gathering in the courtyard of the University had taken place at an early hour in the morning; it was now noon; and the assembly broke up for dinner, to return at two o'clock. At that hour the disputation began.

CHAPTER VII.

ECK AND CARLSTADT—EVANGELICAL METAPHYSICS.

We cannot, much as we may desire to do so, ignore the part played in the Leipzig disputation by Carlstadt. Not only did Luther come almost stealthily into the field under the shadow of his broadly displayed banner, but he was, on a quite essential point, the spokesman of the Wittenberg reformers. From the 27th of June to the 3rd of July, 1519, Eck and Carlstadt disputed on the crucial question of the nature and method of salvation. Is it of grace wholly and solely? Is the will of man impotent for good, and potent only for evil? Is man dead in sin, and unable even to contribute to his own spiritual resurrection?

Carlstadt, supported and counselled by Luther, and aided by the erudition of Melanchthon, maintained the high Augustinian doctrine, declaring man to be dead in sin, and salvation to be the result of a new birth, a new creation, the work of God alone. The subject is one of vast compass, and involves the discussion of difficulties that emerge in philosophy as well as in theology, and will continue to receive various solutions, or to be pronounced insoluble, until man ceases to take any interest in moral speculation. Eck defended the liberal view, accumulating objections

to what might colourably be represented as a theory of all-embracing prostration, paralysis, and death of goodness in human nature. If man's will were powerless for good, would he not, asked Eck, be as incapable of virtue or of vice as a stone? Were not the consequences, moreover, of pronouncing man, even renewed man, incapable of any act or thought that was perfectly good, as startling as they were obvious? St. Laurence, in his little boat, intent on deeds of mercy, was he, every moment, sinning? St. Peter, dying for Christ's sake, head downwards on the cross, was he, even in casting his eyes to heaven in silent prayer, a sinner? Questions like these, adroitly put by Eck, could not fail to produce a marked effect on a mixed audience. The sympathy of the spectators was not with the Wittenbergers. Carlstadt, besides, was no match for Eck either in rhetorical dexterity or in learning. The Ingoldstadt champion, accustomed to disputation in the Italian universities, had his quotations at his tongue's end, and had no difficulty in plying Carlstadt with passages from the early fathers. Carlstadt demanded permission to bring his books into the hall of disputation. Eck vehemently objected. Luther, impelled as he knew himself to be by a burning desire for truth, took this proceeding as a conclusive proof that Eck was fighting for mere victory. "Who," he asked in a letter to Spalatin, "cannot see that, if the dispute were carried on for the sake of truth, our opponents would have wished all possible help to be had from books?" * Eck, however, held to it that the

* De Wette, 147.

competent debater ought to have read the necessary books at home, and should carry his library in his skull; and as they saw Carlstadt fumbling among his volumes the audience agreed with Eck.

To the objection that the Wittenbergers reduced man morally to the state of a stone, the answer of Luther and Carlstadt was that a stone could not be filled with the life and light of God as could the human soul. The assertion that all human virtue is imperfect, which seems monstrous when applied to instances like those of St. Laurence and St. Peter, really has its counterpart in the ethical doctrine that the possibilities of spiritual progress are infinite—that man never absolutely attains to his moral ideal. It is not, after all, appalling to be told that the best of men is not good in the degree in which the Infinite God is good. "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights." The human cannot, on earth, be so permeated by the Divine that no alloy of the human remains. This is the ethical purport of the central doctrine of the Reformation.

Luther represents Eck as having at first made his attack, with clamorous insistence and vainglorious gestures, on the lines of popular and superficial repugnance to the Augustinian theology suggested by those questions about St. Laurence and St. Peter. When, however, he found himself pressed by arguments of real weight, Eck, says Luther, turned round within the hour, and with unblushing face declared that *he* had con-

strained Carlstadt to yield. Not only did Eck now profess to hold the doctrine of the exclusive operation of Divine grace in saving the soul, but boldly affirmed that the scholastic doctors taught no other. Luther knew the schoolmen well, and this "too impudent" position he would not let Eck occupy for a moment. Driven out of his first too broad position, but not abashed, Eck threw overboard the recent scholastic sects, and fell back on the old schoolmen. Luther expresses the belief that the crowd of Leipzig theologians, who uproariously supported Eck, were cut to the heart by this desertion of his allies, "although they contrived to mask their agony in the semblance of a grin, *etsi risum miserrime simularent.*" "It was enough for Carlstadt," proceeds Luther, "to have forced Eck to disown three very celebrated scholastic sects, which he had paraded as auxiliaries within the hour. Unless he had given up those authorities, he would have returned to Ingoldstadt a convicted Pelagian." * Luther does not say, and, though much of his language on the subject is rash and intemperate, he never deliberately maintained, that Aquinas and Lombard called in question the sole and omnipotent operation of Divine grace.

* De Wette, 149.

CHAPTER VIII.

LUTHER AND ECK—THE PRACTICAL QUESTION.

The debate had turned hitherto upon propositions in metaphysical theology: but when at length Luther confronted Eck the question at issue between them was practical. This ecclesiastical Colossus, whose shadow darkens all the western world—how was it set up? By what investiture has the Pope of Rome been robed with the terror, dressed in the authority, of Almighty God? How has the Church of Rome been exalted so high above the sisterhood of Christian churches? Eck answered these questions in one way, Luther in another; and the men, as has been said, represented, with dramatic vividness of contrast, the principles embodied in their respective answers.

Eck, ponderous, plausible, commonplace, gave the answer which had for a thousand years kept the mind of Europe in thraldom. The Pope was the successor of St. Peter, on whom Christ's own lips had conferred, in words recorded by St. Matthew, the primacy of the Church, the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. If Christ was King over the kings of the world, so also was the Pope. To refuse to submit to him was to pass beyond the pale of salvation. Of course, the

chief Biblical evidence in support of this view consisted of the passage in St. Matthew's Gospel; but Eck buttressed his argument with considerations drawn from the general analogy of the Divine government. The constitution appointed to Israel was, he urged, monarchical. The universe has a King—God. The Saviour expressly told His disciples that He would govern His Church "according to all things which He had seen His Father do;" and if it could not be disputed that the government of the universe was monarchical, it must be granted that Christ was thus pledged to introduce monarchy into His Church. He had named the monarch of His earthly kingdom—Saint Peter: and the lineal successor of Peter, in his episcopate and in his princedom, was the Pope. To this view a procession of illustrious fathers and divines had, he averred, given their support during many ages.

Luther accepted Eck's position that the government of the universe is monarchical, and admitted that the government of the Church follows the analogy of the government of the universe. But he contended that the sole King of the Church is Christ Himself. In the strict sense of the words, there is, he maintained, no governor, no head, of the Church except Christ. He governs now. He is not dead or slumbering. He is a living, a present Christ. His Divine right has been delegated to no man, to no church, to no aggregate of churches. But this does not imply that there is no Church government, no Church unity. It implies only that the officials of Christ's Church govern

by New Testament law and by inspiration of the Spirit.

The *principles* of Church government, Luther in effect contended, are clear, simple, universal, everlasting. They peremptorily exclude lordship. They peremptorily include the spiritual equality of Christians. They reject all physical compulsion, all tyrannous constraint, all discipline that is not based on the sympathy and fellowship of a spiritual life. But they are not incompatible with order and regulations. They do not exclude natural leadership. Luther had no objection to a precedence, a deference, a primacy, conceded to Peter on the ground of his personal qualities. But a precedence of similar nature, though it might be less in extent, was conceded, on parallel grounds, to James, to John, to Paul.

Proceeding on this line of argument, Luther endeavoured to gain assent for a scheme on which a *modus vivendi* might be established between the Reformers and the Church of Rome. He felt himself under no compulsion to prove that Peter had never been Bishop of Rome. Whether he had or not, he never gave himself out as occupying the place of the unseen but living Master. The chief apostles led the Church, as being the men best fitted for leadership. Peter was eminent; so was James; John probably valued himself more highly than either. Paul denied as positively, as explicitly, as words could do, that any right belonged to Peter empowering him to play the Pope over his brethren. The Church was a spiritual brotherhood,

governed, in so far as it needed government, by the purely spiritual influence of its most Christian men. The simple and natural rules which regulated precedence among Christians were to be applied with no essential modification to regulate precedence among Christian churches. The ever-increasing aggregate of churches, constituting the Church, was to be pervaded by a true unity of spirit, of practice, of faith. Its frontier line was to be perpetually carried outward and onward, and to be so carried until the whole planet had been sown with the seed-pearl of Christian churches. In the sisterhood of churches whose aggregate formed the Church, the lead was at first held by the Church of Jerusalem. But this was so, not because Christ had bestowed authority upon the Jerusalem church, or had appointed one church to govern the rest, but simply because the Jerusalem church possessed the largest number of men eminent for their Christian qualifications.

And if the Church of Jerusalem had been honoured, why not the Church of Rome? Luther could thus find scope for that ardent enthusiasm for his Mother Church which he had nursed since his youth. Her services to the body of Christian churches had been more important than those of any other church. Her bishops had risen above the episcopal crowd like cypress trees among willows. The multitude of her martyrs had crowned her with glory and honour. The general sentiment of Christendom had accorded her precedence. To rebel against this general sentiment was mutiny and sectarianism. But all this was matter of natural

arrangement; not of supernatural injunction. The Bishop of Rome possessed no Divine right which was not shared in by other bishops.

Luther most carefully pointed out that to say authority is not exercised by Divine right, but by human, is by no means to impugn its validity. He did not forbid the Church of Rome to conduct the administration of the Church as a whole; but required her to do so in accordance with Christ's law, and in virtue of a natural and common, not a supernatural and unique, qualification.

That the theological bigwigs of Leipzig were amazed, bewildered, shocked, by these views as put forward by Luther, in July, 1519, is nowise surprising. Not until our nineteenth century has it been practically possible to do them justice—to perceive how completely they provide means for healing the wounds of Christendom—or to fathom their profound wisdom as tried by the principles of modern philosophy. In the apostolic age, the men most deeply illuminated by the Spirit of Christ led in the churches. The church honoured by God to do the most excellent service to the body of churches led in the community of churches. Nothing could have been simpler; and yet the arrangement yielded all the unity necessary to life, all the freedom, the movement, the interest, the variety, that promote progress, quicken vitality, and produce health. No scheme so beautifully efficient for the reconstitution of Christendom can be suggested. The best Christian of to-day—the most deeply imbued with the Spirit of Christ—be his birthplace and abode what they may, shall inherit the primacy

of Peter, a primacy of influence exercised as informally as Peter's was exercised, of deference accorded as spontaneously as the first Christians accorded theirs to Peter. The most exemplary and enlightened Christian church of the day, the most illustrious for its faith, the most zealous in good works, whether its seat be Rome, or London, or New York, shall, in like manner, take the lead in the sisterhood of churches, and be what Jerusalem was among the apostolic churches, what Rome was among the churches of the fourth century, what (be it added) Wittenberg was in the days of Luther, what Geneva was in the days of Calvin. Such would be the natural action of Luther's principle, as applied in an age which has learned from science that motion is the chief law of life and that monotony is the presage of death.

But the Leipzig sages were not fit for this. The ideas which still ruled the minds of men were ideas of rigid form and absolute fixity. Change in matters ecclesiastical suggested destruction. Institutions were then taken as stereotyped. We now think of them as evolved. The best proof for us of their stability is that they are being perennially evolved. But it implied immense genius, as well as intrepidity, and the finest spiritual discernment, to perceive, as Martin Luther did, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, that a stereotyped Papacy was not Christ's conception of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Some readers may not unreasonably ask how the preceding view of the claims of the Church of Rome

can be reconciled with Luther's word in Spalatin's ear as to his suspicion that the Pope might be Antichrist. The only reply that can be rendered, if we maintain, as in substantials we may, the consistency of Luther, is that he held the Antichristian element to be in the Roman *Curia*, not in the Roman Church. Eck, however, and the theological professors of Leipzig, saw merely, or cared to see, that if Luther's view prevailed, the chains of iron in which the Roman Pontiff held Christendom would be transformed into silken cords. And it was plain that, whatever might be the specialties of Luther's argument, the result of setting men free to preach the Gospel according to the light of conscience and of the Bible was common to it and to the views held by some whom all fervent Papists looked upon as heretics. Accordingly, immediately before the close of the forenoon sitting, on the fifth day of the debate, Eck took a new departure. With marked graciosity of manner, "craving pardon of the reverend father," he begged to inquire whether the opinions maintained by Luther did not bring him into association with the heretics of Bohemia?

Luther felt the blow. Answering with a prompt and vehement denial, he proceeded to define with lucid precision his relation to the Bohemians. Avowing himself to be imperfectly informed as to the tenets of the various Bohemian sects, he referred to the report that some of these called in question the reality of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament. With such he could have no agreement. Moreover, they had separated from the

Church, and this was an offence against Christian union, a lapse into the sin of schism. He refused, therefore, to be identified with the Bohemians.

The incident made a deep impression on the audience. During the dinner-hour it was eagerly discussed in the town. Luther bethought him, or his friends reminded him, of the Bohemian strangers whom his preaching of the grace of God had attracted to Leipzig. He was not the man to fail a friend, and he did not choose that it should be given out that he was afraid or ashamed to stand by those who had trustfully and bravely acknowledged him.

Accordingly, when the discussion recommenced at two o'clock, Luther recurred to Eck's insidious question. Repeating the statement that he took no pleasure, and never would take pleasure, in schism or separation, he added that among the articles of Huss were "many whose character was plainly and superlatively Christian."

The assemblage held its breath. "That is insanity!" said Duke George. Huss had died by fire as an enemy of God and man. The Germans, who regarded the Bohemian Czechs with hatred and scorn, were specially bitter against him. The feeling of Europe had been and continued to be that he had deserved his doom. To do justice to Huss might have required less courage if he had died by judgment simply of the Pope and Inquisition. But though the Pontiff of the period had been officiously zealous against Huss, it was the Council of Constance, a Council that carried it with a high hand over Popes and heretics alike, that sent him to the stake.

In speaking a clear, bold word for Huss, Luther struck at Council as well as Pope, virtually denying infallibility to both, virtually asserting that there lies, from both, an appeal to the court of conscience and the Word of God. But this was a strange and startling position at that time of day. It seemed plain to Duke George and other simple mortals that Luther avowed himself the patron both of heresy and of anarchy. Dr. Eck, a practised disputant, knew how to improve his advantage and bear hard upon an adversary whom all men regarded with horror. The tenet of Huss and Wickliffe, that acceptance of Roman supremacy was not necessary to salvation, he denounced as damnable. The complacent bitterness of his accusations, the pertinacity with which he refused to recognise the distinctions Luther had drawn between his own position and that of the Hussites, and the fervent backing he received from the audience, drove Martin from his self-possession. "I protest," he cried, "that the Doctor speaks of me mendaciously and impudently." At this, Eck, physically indomitable, and supported by a Duke and a host of ecclesiastical and university bigwigs, could afford to smile. Luther quivered with fury and writhed with disappointment. In his heart he was more convinced than ever that Eck had no true ambition to penetrate to truth, but fought only for controversial victory. It had now become plain that the discussion, stormy and acrimonious, could lead to no practical result in the way of agreement. The sooner the affair could be got ended, the better.

That exultation of confident hope in the prospect of the Leipzig disputation which we found Luther betraying in his letter to Spalatin had indeed given place to a mood of disenchantment and distress. He now saw with poignant clearness that little was to be done in the way of search for truth under the conditions of the debate. In spite of his native shrewdness, he had previously yielded to the illusive belief that truth has but to be seen in her own reasonableness in order to be recognised and accepted. He had not reflected how faint is the vapour of emotional preference—how slight the bias of *amour propre*—how unsuspected the breeze of applause in the sail of vanity—that suffices to deflect the voyager from the right line in steering towards the goal.

CHAPTER IX.

MEMORABILIA OF THE DISPUTATION—LUTHER'S PERSONAL DEMEANOUR—THE WIND-UP.

The importance of the Leipzig disputation as a landmark in the history of the Reformation consists almost exclusively in its having afforded occasion for the clear statement, at that particular juncture, of Luther's view of the Church. Before this time his opinion had not matured. Soon after this time his antagonism to Rome became so fierce that little more could be expected from him, when her claims were mentioned, than gnashing of teeth. But at this specific moment he was able not only to sweep away, with the besom of logic and common sense, the infinite cobweb-growth of Divine right ecclesiastical officialism, but to realise, with a Neander-like freshness of sympathetic apprehension, the church life of the Apostolic age. He avoided the two extremes—Papacy and Schism—and discerned, in the unity of the Christian Church, not the cast-iron form of a corporation, not the mere inorganic cohesion of congregational atoms, but a unique and exquisite combination of liberty and order, of spontaneity and law. With that plausibility which half-truths can always be made to wear by skilful rhetoricians, Eck

dilated on the sacredness of the forms of Church government, protesting against their being left to the rule of expediency, the mere *jus humanum*. But Luther maintained the dignity of human right, urging that it is upon this right that all forms of secular government rest. If the Papacy was of Divine right, then, he pathetically urged, the whole Eastern Church would lie beyond salvation; the great Council of Nice, which placed the Roman Pontiff on a level with the bishops of other metropolitan cities, had been in deadly sin. If, on the other hand, the truth of the Gospel was immutably Divine, and if the principles of Church government were always the same, but the forms of Church government, like the forms of State government, fluent and flexible as circumstances required, then provision would be made both for stability and for progress.

Should the problem of reconciling Christians to Christians ever be solved, except in the peace of indifference and spiritual death, it can be solved only on such lines as Luther traced, or suggested, at Leipzig in 1519. But how vain and visionary seems such a hope! The Papal Church continues to hug her infallibility; and we Protestants have all set up our Divine-right tabernacles—Divine-right Episcopacy, Divine-right Presbytery, Divine-right Congregationalism, Divine-right Methodism. The unsophisticated reader may see at a glance that Luther's scheme of Church unity was that of the New Testament. Modern criticism has done *more* than support his general contention against Eck. The obvious argument, irresistible to common sense unless the mind

is triply cased in the steel of prejudice, that the episcopal successors of Peter, real or imaginary, could not possibly inherit an exclusive primacy of which Peter himself never betrays the remotest idea, was sufficient for Luther. But modern criticism declares the passage in St. Matthew's Gospel to be, as it stands, so thoroughly at variance with the parallel passages in the other Gospels, and so irreconcilably divergent from the spirit, letter, and universal analogy, of Christ's teaching, that its *differentia* must be a post-apostolic interpolation.*

Among the *memorabilia* of the Leipzig disputation is to be noted Luther's first public recognition of Huss as a fore-runner. Huss takes with him Wickliffe. In some respects these two—and Wickliffe, perhaps, more than Huss, for he was the more solid man of the two—may be ranked higher than Luther. Not only were they in the true Protestant succession, as resting on the Bible, but they entertained views on the Lord's Supper in which, and not in the specific opinion of Luther on the subject, the great body of modern Protestants have concurred. But in power of moving men, Huss and Wickliffe were a thousand miles behind Luther. And Rome triumphed over both. When the body of Wickliffe had been taken from the grave and burnt, and his ashes scattered upon Lutterworth brook, those ashes carried indeed to all shores washed by the ocean the news of an attack having been made on Rome, but they carried also the news of Rome's victory over the assailant. The influence of Huss was still

* Professor Pfleiderer, of Berlin, Hibbert Lectures.

more local than that of Wickliffe. The feeling of Europe was against him. In the hundred years that intervened between the death of Huss and the rise of Luther, immense preparation had been made for the advent of the latter, but it was connected with the revival of letters, the invention of the printing-press, the writings of Reuchlin and Erasmus, rather than with the influence of Wickliffe and Huss. It was from Paul, from Augustine, from Tauler, that Luther lit his torch. And his first direct blow at Romanism—the publication of the Theses—had made the whole edifice of the Papacy reel from base to pinnacle. No such blow had ever been struck by Huss or Wickliffe. Illustrious, gifted, useful men those were; true Protestant pioneers, and diggers of fine gold from the mines of Scripture; but they died before the dawn.

From the time of Luther's arrival in Leipzig the suffrage of the town had been against him. Wherever he went he was environed with sour looks and angry scowls. Once, with pious intent, he entered a church where mass was being performed. The officiating priests and monks, wildly alarmed lest the evil eye of the heretic might fall upon their sanctified apparatus, bundled it hastily into some consecrated recess. Once, and once only, he had been asked to preach. On this occasion, though it became known, only a very little time before, that he was to mount the pulpit, so great a throng rushed into the chapel of the castle that they were forced to adjourn to the great hall in which the disputation took place. He preached on the question uppermost in his mind—

the claim of Rome to dominate Christendom in the name of St. Peter. Though placing himself under some restraint, he could not treat such a subject without giving offence and alarm to Popish zealots. Accordingly, he was honoured with no second invitation to preach; and Eck entered the pulpit four successive times to reply to him. So general and intense was the animosity with which he was regarded that, instead of preaching, he prudently remained at home while others preached.

The detestation, rage, and horror with which he was looked upon by the Leipzigers reached that degree of intensity which stimulates the imagination of poor mankind to morbid action. It was at this time and in this place that the hideous myths about his infancy came into existence. A "religious old woman" gave rise to the most revolting of them. Other pious imbeciles, not to be behind the authoress of the myth of his diabolic parentage, started myths about his present intercourse with evil spirits. It was customary in Saxony, in 1519, for people to wear gold rings. Luther, too poor to afford a gold ring, wore one of silver, and Eck takes care to specify that there was attached to the ring some small object, apparently a minute casket or locket. About this arose much talk. Martin was observed to bring the thing often into communication with his face, the fact probably being that he smelt at the flower, or sweetbriar, or lavender spray, which he carried in his hand. The theory of the Papal zealots was that on these occasions he was consulting or beseeching a familiar spirit ensconced in the trinket or the

ring. He took no further notice of these sad fooleries than to remark that such things were the concomitances of a hopeless cause.

The demeanour of Luther under the very trying circumstances of his situation during those hot July days in Leipzig was, on the whole, worthy of him. He lost his temper no doubt, and gave Eck the lie with choleric bluntness; but in general he maintained a vivacious and animated serenity of manner, vigilant, alert, and earnest, but not ponderously grave. In society he showed his power of detachment, and could be gay and amused with trifles. Stiffly opposed as Duke George was to his doctrines, Luther recognised his wish to be fair, and owned that he had done all that munificence and courtesy could suggest to make the disputation yield harvest of truth. Luther dined with the Duke in company with Melanchthon and Carlstadt. Simple-minded George had considerably rallied from the shock of hearing sympathy avowed with a burnt heresiarch, and had contrived to understand that there might be efficient rule and governance in the Church though the Pope had no miraculous prerogatives, and though ecclesiastical forms were allowed to adapt themselves to the wants and varieties of Christian life. "Be it by Divine right, or be it by human, the Pope anyhow," remarked simple George, "is Pope." This comforting fact Luther nowise contested, and took the observation for a proof that George had some tincture of sense in him. To Eck also Luther was not unjust, though severe, looking upon him as a professional

disputant, who rejoiced in his scholastic ingenuities, worshipped the phantom of glory, and was not passionately in earnest in his quest for truth. "In humane letters," wrote Luther to Spalatin, describing his opponent, "variously and copiously furnished; unversed in Holy Writ." *

Eck was the idol of Leipzig. The townsmen hung upon his words, cheered him to the echo, joined him in crowing over the Wittenbergers, took him out driving in their carriages among their linden trees, and asked him to dinner. An excellent trencherman, of unbounded animal spirits, of great accomplishment and mental vigour, he was no tiresome companion. In his own eyes, and in those of Town and Gown in Leipzig, he was conspicuously victorious. The Wittenberg faction and the Leipzig faction set the controversial battle in array in all taverns and at all public tables, and judicious hosts took care to supply themselves with guardians of order, armed with halberts, who stood ready to intervene if the war proceeded from words to blows.

The honour of winding up the whole affair with due oratorical display was bestowed upon John Lang, Rector Magnificus of the University. The existence of a decided prejudice against Luther in Leipzig renders it worth while to note the terms of deliberate and high commendation in which Lang referred to him. The Rector apostrophises him as *virum integerrimum*, a man sound to the core. Having touched on the constancy of his search for truth, Lang alludes to the

* De Wette, 140

consistent purity of his private walk. "Not less in life than in doctrine, you act the part of Augustine." * The peroration of the speech, though four centuries have taken the gloss from its learning, sounds not ill in the stately Latin vocables of the original. "Gentlemen," said the Magnific Rector, "I am unable by any oratorical power of mine to do justice to the genius and virtues of men so eminent as these rival champions. Let me follow the example of the painter Timanthes. He, having to paint the cruel sacrifice of Iphigeneia, delineated Calchas, the sad prophet of the Trojan war, Ulysses dissolved in tears, Menelaus oppressed with sorrow. But when he came to Agamemnon he felt that the powers of his brush were exhausted, and covered the face with a veil."

The orator judiciously left it to his audience to decide whether the veiled Agamemnon stood for Luther or for Eck. Martin had not waited for the oratorical *finale*, but returned to Wittenberg when the serious business was at an end. If the Magnific Rector esteemed Luther as highly as his rhetoric avouched, he was an exception in the town and University of Leipzig. Eck lingered in the place for a week or two after the end of the disputation. Duke George presented him with a fine stag, thus recognising him as conventionally the victor; Carlstadt got a hind; Luther, not having been officially a combatant, got nothing. The University theologians were so charmed with Eck's performance in the tournament that he went through a rehearsal of

* *Et doctrinâ et vivendi ratione Augustinum agis.*

it for their special delectation. An obliging collegian consented to stand up in order to be knocked over by his irrefragable arguments. At last Eck said that his adversary "savoured of Martin Luther," and he would have no more to do with him. At which bright joke there was no doubt broad-grinning laughter, and the jubilant dons were persuaded that their champion had extinguished his adversary, and that the jubilance of their gay academical coterie was in very deed "the great wave that echoes round the world."

END OF VOL. I.

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